

Western



Tanager

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A POORWILL SLEEPS THE WINTER AWAY

George T. Hastings

On the 25th of November Mr. J. W. Douglas of Long Beach was hunting mineral specimens in the Borego Desert. On a rocky slope he noticed a peculiar mottled gray and brown stone lying among others on a steep slope. But when the stone was picked up it proved to be - not a stone but a small bird. While it seemed lifeless something about it suggested to Mr. Douglas that it actually was alive. Water from a recent rain had washed soil over it, which with the natural protective coloration made it practically impossible to distinguish the bird from stones between which it was lying, so that is quite remarkable that it was noticed at all. Mr. Douglas carried the bird home and cleaned its feathers. In the warmth of his living room it woke and flew around a little, but seemed to prefer to settle down in a corner and doze off. The story of the find created considerable interest and many people came to see the sleeping bird. Mr. Douglas' children and their friends found it intriguing to handle the bird, which they did carefully, almost lovingly. But a warm room and much attention was certainly not good for a bird in its condition. One of our Society members, Mr. Frederick Blunt, suggested to Mr. Douglas that it would be much better if the bird could be cared for at the Audubon Center and released near where it was found as soon as it naturally awakened in the spring. So the bird is now in a cool storeroom, sleeping between the rocks Mr. Douglas brought with it from its chosen hibernating spot. When first put in the store room it flew around a little but soon settled down. It is completely dormant, does not respond in any way to being touched, feels as cold as the stones beside it and no sign of breathing can be detected. Weighed on postal scales it was just one ounce. Mrs. Stultz examines it every day, without touching it. The only movements she has detected has been a slight ruffling of the feathers of the head and neck when the temperature falls a little and once or twice a partial raising of one wing. It has been photographed but is not disturbed in any way and the room is kept at the same temperature as out of doors.

In the past there have been many stories of hibernating birds, many of them as explanations of the disappearance of migrating birds in late summer. Swallows were supposed to dive below the surface of ponds and spend the winter in the mud at the bottom. Other birds were reported as wintering behind shutters or loose boards on buildings. But all these stories were long ago proved false.

The first authentic case of a hibernating bird was of a Poorwill discovered in December of 1946 by Mr. Edmund C. Jaeger of Riverside in the Chuckwalla Mountains between the Salton Sea and the Colorado River. Next year the same bird, presumably, was found in the same spot. It was banded and found again for the next two winters. It was carefully studied, its temperature taken every two weeks, it was weighed at intervals and efforts made to determine its heart beat and respiration. Its temperature was

very low, 64.4 whereas the normal would be about 106. The weighing showed an almost imperceptible loss of weight each time it was put on the scales.

Full accounts of the experience were published in Condor and later in the National Geographic Magazine for February, 1953.

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WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

At the afternoon program meeting Thursday, January 6, Kenneth Stager chose as the "Bird of the Month" the Blue-footed Booby, *Sula Brewsteri*. This otherwise dull-colored bird has the most amazingly blue-colored feet, a beautiful azure; the bill is sharply serrated so that its bite is painful. Tho' no mental giant among birds the booby is an accomplished fisherman and is preyed upon by man-o-war birds who rob it of its catch. Occasionally one has been found here in the fall, one off its course as it travels to islands in the Gulf of California where they breed by the tens of thousands. The last such stray now lives a life of ease in our new Marineland where it is much admired.

Mr. John M. Olquin, of the Cabrillo Beach Museum told of the Tide-Pool Life on Southern California Beaches. Having lived at Point Firmin a great part of his life, Mr. Olquin knows this section of the coast intimately. Some specimens in the present museum, - a converted bath house, - he collected before a museum was thought of. Soon there will be a fine new museum building, and a nature walk along the beach and around the point where there is so much to be learned of the creatures in and near the sea.

He told of the several kinds of whales seen in the vicinity, mostly migrants on their way to breeding grounds in the Gulf of Lower California. Lobsters are plentiful, tho' not easily caught by skin divers as they make a kind of squeek which gives warning of intruders. They lay 4000 eggs a year and shed their shells twice a year. A relative of the lobster, the barnacle, is delicious made into a chowder. Sunfish which weigh up to two tons have bullet-proof vests.

Then there was a color film of grunion. These unusual fish about 7 inches long, come up on the beach at night at certain seasons to lay their eggs. At the point where the waves stop the female digs herself in, tail first, to half her length; as she is doing this the male fertilizes the eggs, then both are caught by the waves and washed back into the sea. A female may lay 5000 eggs every two weeks. As the eggs hatch the young are also washed out to sea. If they survive they

will return to lay eggs as their ancestors have done for untold years - if a grunion hunter does not grab them first.

For the field trip to Griffith Park Zoo and surrounding areas the weather was clear but chilly. Under the leadership of Miss Ethel Craig the party of 14 identified 26 species of birds, - among them tit-mice, and thrashers. After lunch several members went with Miss Fope to Audubon House to study some of the exhibits there.

AN APTERYX AT SAN DIEGO

On December 7 the San Diego Zoo received as a gift from the government of New Zealand one of these rare wingless birds. It came by plane, carefully packed in a carton. The following day the Los Angeles Times published a picture of it and Life Magazine in the January 10 number had a full page picture and several smaller ones, calling it a surviving fossil. While apparently wingless the bird does have small rudiments of wings completely hidden beneath the feathers.

OUR NEW CHECK LISTS

We now have three lists carefully prepared for different uses and users. For advanced students there is the YELLOW LIST giving all the birds known from Southern California. For beginners and youth groups, but complete enough for anyone for the local area, is the GREEN LIST with the birds arranged alphabetically by families. These are sold at 3¢ each. The study list, with the birds arranged by habitats is the BLUE LIST. This is of 3 folded pages and sells for 5¢. These will be on sale at all of our regular meetings and on the trips.

Poorwill, continued from first page.

The Poorwill at the Audubon Center at El Monte shows all the signs of real hibernation. It will be carefully watched and if it awakens sometime within the next month or two, as we ardently hope it will, it will be banded by Pat Gould, photographed again, then taken back to the desert where it was found and liberated. Probably many other Poorwills are hibernating now on the mountains of the southern desert, but only by unusual chance will one be found.

CONSERVATION NOTES

Robert Blackstone, Chairman Conservation Committee

Lest I be accused of too much harping on the subject of the Echo Park Dam, I should like to quote from Richard Leonard, President of the Sierra Club - "We are more than ever convinced that the Echo Park proposal is the gravest threat to our National Park system since that system was created in 1916. There are pending at the present time proposals to build 16 dams in 8 National Parks and Monuments, and we have not the slightest doubt that if Congress should authorize Echo Park Dam, the pressure would at once be on to authorize these 15 other dams."

Proponents of the Upper Colorado River Storage Project really mean business; the Upper Colorado River Commission has plans to place a "representative" in Washington during the coming Congress to "contact members of Congress, reach all groups and organizations, prepare and distribute brochures and pamphlets and to secure the aid of the press of the nation." They have voted \$39,000 for this purpose - \$12,000 for a Washington office, \$10,000 to prepare a documentary film, and \$5,000 each for pamphlets and newspaper publicity.

However, on the other side of the ledger - it has been announced that 3 new organizations have been formed to spearhead the Campaign against the project. We must be ready to throw our weight in when the time comes. I will do my best to keep you informed of further developments.

In our own state a committee report recommending that the black bear be listed as a predator has been filed with the Fish and Game Commission. A minority report discounting the need for such legislative action has been filed by E. Larry Meyers, Klamath sportsman and member of the committee. The Sierra Club and the Associated Sportsmen of California have gone on record as opposing this legislation which has been so sought by some northern lumber interests who claim that bears occasionally damage young trees. Dr. A. Starker Leopold of the University of California, who has spoken strongly against the proposed legislation, commented that the black bear is the closest thing we have to a

state animal, and that if it were outlawed, Fish and Game personnel would be required to eradicate it where possible. He felt that this would not be in the best interests of the people of California.

Phillip Boyd of Riverside, who as a former assemblyman, introduced the Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority Act, was recently quoted as predicting that efforts to repeal the act would fail. Let us prove that he was wrong. If you have not yet written to your representative in the State Legislature, do so at once to let them know you feel that the Winter Park Authority should be repealed and state your feeling on the status of the black bear in California.

Incidentally an advertisement of lots for sale in a desert resort near Palm Springs received by the editor gave as an inducement for investing in their lots that the San Jacinto Tramway was sure of being built in the near future.

A new CONSERVATION publication - The ALERT- has been received. This is intended to keep everyone interested in the Conservation of our Parks, Monuments and Wilderness Areas informed of threats against them. This first number has material on the threat to the San Jacinto Wilderness Area by the Winter Park Authority, to the Joshua Tree National Monument by mining interests, and to Dinosaur National Monument by the Upper Colorado River Storage Project. The editor of The Alert is Walter P. Taylor of the Claremont Graduate School. Norman H. Mellor of the Idyllwild School of Conservation and Natural Resources, is Guest Editor. Subscription to the publication is \$2.00 and can be sent to Margaret Henderson, Secretary-Treasurer, 1152 Picacho Drive, La Habra, Calif.

Samuel King, Superintendent of the Joshua Tree National Monument has reported that in 1950 72,671 visitors registered at the monument; in 1953 the number was 172,421; last year there were 260,730. The number will, of course, increase as more people learn of the unique character and beauty of the area. The San Bernardino County Mining Association says "Production is what counts, God's Creation cannot be much marred by mere man." But we might answer "it has been and can be."

OBSERVATIONS

Ruby Curry

Dec. 31 - Jan. 1, a trip to Ensenada and beyond by Miss Curry, Dorothy Groner, Alma and Miller Stultz with Miss Grenville Hatch of the Hawaiian Audubon Society resulted in a list of 63 species. Among them Horned, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, American Bittern, California and Anthony Green Heron, Green-winged Teal, Baldpate, Ruddy, Shoveller and Bufflehead Ducks, Sora Rail and 9 Florida Gallinules and a flock of Tree Swallows at Carlsbad.

Along the way and at Ensenada several Hawks - Cooper, Marsh, Swainson, Ferruginous Rough-leg and very many Sparrow. Also innumerable Say's Phoebes, many Ravens and Western and Mountain Bluebirds, and on the beach many shore birds.

PELICANS: Jan. 8 a White Pelican in the ocean off Venice, watched for some time with binoculars by Mrs. Clara Splitter and Norma.

DUCKS, GEESE: Ballona Creek, Dec. 31, 22 Baldpates, 200 Lesser Scaup, 53 Ruddy; Jan 1, 1 Canada Goose, 1 American Goldeneye (R.B.); At Audubon Center, Jan. 6, Green-winged Teal, Mallards, Baldpates, Pintails and Shovellers; Jan. 17 on a rain-flooded field west of Lincoln Blvd. 100 Shovellers, a few Pintails, 1 Snow Goose with 2 American Egrets (R.B.).

HAWKS: At Audubon Center 1 White-tailed Kite, Pigeon, Sharp-shinned, Red-bellied, Red-tailed and Marsh (A. Stultz); 4 Marsh at one time, Dec. 31 at Ballona Creek, 7 seen together, Jan. 1 (R.B.).

SHORE BIRDS: At Audubon Center, Jan. 1 to 6, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted, Least, Red-backed and Western Sandpipers, Avocet and Black-necked Stilt (A.S.); Jan. 8, Venice Beach, many Snowy Flovers, (Mrs. C. S.).

LOONS: Red-throated, Ballona Creek, Jan. 1 (R. Blackstone); Common, Jan. 10, Del Rey (Hastings and Koehlers).

OWLS: Pacific Horned near La Jolla, Dec. 31, (D. Groner): Short-eared, Playa del Rey, Jan. 1 (R.B.).

WREN-TIT: Jan. 2 to 14, singing and calling at Eagle Rock (R.C.).

WAXWINGS: Audubon Center, Jan. 6, 190 Cedar Waxwings (A.S.).

A VISIT TO HAWAII

Earle F. Greene

The excellent article in the December Tanager by Mrs. Alma Stultz describing her trip to Hawaii, prompts me to tell you of the trip Mrs. Greene and I made to the same "Paradise of the Pacific".

Leaving Los Angeles at midnight our plane broke through the clouds in early morning and we landed at the Honolulu Air Port to be met by Bob and Billie Pyle and their grandmother, Mrs. Clarke. Also Joe King, Mrs. King and their children Sally and Peter were on hand. After being showered with leis we were taken to the Moana Hotel, our headquarters.

Pyle and King gave us much time, showing us many interesting birds on the island of Oahu, on which Honolulu is located.

In addition we made trips to the island of Kauai, -the "Garden Island", and enjoyed the wonderful scenery of canyons, rivers and mountains; and also the big island of Hawaii with its forests, volcanoes and charming resorts.

Although the islands have few birds compared with the mainland, those that do occur are extremely interesting. The following were recorded during our short stay and in some cases I am using the native names as given in the Check List of Hawaiian Birds: - Native Land Birds: - Pueo (Short-eared Owl), Elepaio, Amakihi, Apapane.

Freshwater and Shorebirds: - Au Kuu (Black-crowned Night Heron), Alae Ula (Black Gallinule), Alae Keokeo (Coot), Kolea (Golden Plover), Ulili (Wandering Tattler), Akekeke (Ruddy Turnstone), Hunakai (Sanderling), Aeo (Hawaiian Black-necked Stilt).

Introduced Land Birds: - Chinese Thrush, Red-billed Leothrix (Japanese Hill Robin), Mynah, White-eye, Ricebird, English Sparrow, Eastern Cardinal, Brazilian Cardinal.

Seabirds: - Koae (White-tailed Tropic-bird), Red-footed Booby, Frigate-bird, Noie (Hawaiian Noddy), White Tern.

Mynahs were abundant and noisy in some places. I was delighted to see dozens of Golden Flovers. Possibly our most interesting "find" were the beautiful White Terns.

Best wishes and Good Birding in 1955.

OUR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
James Clements

This was our 17th annual count in connection with the National Audubon Christmas count which has been held since 1950 every year during the week between Christmas and New Year. Our 1954 count of birds was very successful. Our intrepid birders covered over 1100 miles on foot and by car in the same area, a circle with a 15-mile diameter, as in other years. They came up with a total of 154 species for the day. This is a good count, considering that every area but one had fewer individuals taking part than last year.

We also had fewer people this year than usual, only 81 as against well over 100 in previous years. I think this reflects thorough birding on the part of the participants. We had a total of some 30,000 individual birds, a drop of 15,000 from last year and of 35,000 from 1952. The greatest drop was in the number of off-shore waterfowl observed. However total numbers of birds have been reduced in almost all Los Angeles areas because of the increasing encroachment of new housing and industrial developments.

Because of the extremely dry period last year the reservoirs and settling basins have lost many of their bird visitors. While December rains made birding in some areas like Griffith Park and Baldwin Hills better than in 1953, the reservoirs, lakes and basins did not have the count they did in previous years. With the good rains we have had this month however, we may get back many of the species and numbers that we missed this year.

We did have more than our share of unusual birds during the count. They included a Hooded Oriole seen by Dorothy Groner and her party; Gray-headed Junco and Solitary Vireo, John Tramentano; Verdin, Clara Pflager; Black-throated Gray Warbler, Santa Monica Club; Red-breasted Nuthatch, Aaron Kreiger (Griffith Park Zoo); Poorwill, Noel McFarland; some other interesting birds not usually reported from Los Angeles during the winter included Desert Sparrow, Ferruginous Rough-leg Hawk, Cactus Wren, American Goldeneye, Canada Goose and Lincoln Sparrow.

I would like to thank the following people for their help in making this another outstanding Los Angeles Christmas Count;-- Bob Blackstone, weather report; Reginald Julian, dinner arrangements; Miss G. Pepke, publicity; Elizabeth Patterson, mimeographing; and Herb Clarke, without whose constant help and advice this count could not have been the success it was. My wife and I also thank each individual for the part they played in this year's count - whether it was an hour spent in the back yard or an eight hour scouring of the marshes.

The full report will be published in Audubon Field Notes for April.

It was a real pleasure working with all of you.

I am reminded of a parable written by one living among the Redwoods, which we might apply to ourselves:

"To be content with small beginnings, -
for his seed is tiny as the mustard's;
To be patient with slow development, -
for he grows but a few inches a year;
To stand straight,
for only low trees can afford to lean or stoop;
To live socially,
for he rarely grows alone;
To grow so tall as to live always in the sunshine,
for it is the underbrush that hides God and the sun;
To outlive every hindrance,
for while fires, disease and lightning kill other trees,
he survives;
And never to stop growing."

Leon Loofbouron

THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY, 1955

Thursday, February 3. AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING, Los Angeles County Museum, Exposition Park, 1:30. Mr. Kenneth Stager will give THE BIRD OF THE MONTH.

Dr. Theodore Downs, Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology will tell of the new HALL OF EVOLVING LIFE, describing what the hall is intended to show and the exhibits already installed or to be set up very soon. He will then conduct the group into the hall and describe further the meaning of the exhibits. Members may meet for lunch at the Museum Cafeteria before the meeting to visit with friends.

Saturday, February 13. SATURDAY FIELD TRIP, to Cabrillo Beach with stops at the sloughs along the way. The trip will start at 8:45 at the end of the car line on Vermont Avenue where automobiles will pick up any who need transportation. Take the "F" car to 116th Street and Vermont. Bring lunch. Ethel Craig, Leader.

Thursday, February 17. THURSDAY FIELD TRIP, to Chatsworth Reservoir. Since the weather in February is so variable no public transportation will be planned. Those driving go out Ventura Boulevard and turn right onto Topanga Canyon Road. Continue on this 4 or 5 miles to Roscoe Blvd. Turn left and continue to Fallbrook Street. Turn right to the gate of the Reservoir, which will be opened to admit our group at 9:30. We will leave by the same gate at about 3 P.M. Dress warmly, bring lunch. 100 Canadian Geese were reported there and the White-tailed Kite is back again this year. Leader, Mary Hood.

For further information call DU 8-7935

Thursday, February 24. STUDY CLASS at Plummer Park, 10 A.M.

First hour: MORE BROADLEAF TREES OF THE COAST by W. Scott Lewis with his excellent kodachrome slides. This will be the concluding talk on this large division of trees.

Second hour: Bird Study, THE MOST INTELLIGENT BIRD IN THE WORLD, by Thomas Parker with bird skins and pictures to illustrate the talk.

Sunday, February 27. SUNDAY FIELD TRIP to Griffith Park for chaparral birds. Take Vermont bus to Monroe Street and transfer to bus marked Field House or Picnic Grounds. Bus leaves at 7:30 A.M. and every half hour thereafter. Meet at Field House. Bring lunch. Leader, Dorothy Groner

Visitors are welcome at these meetings and trips.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

Friday evening, Feb. 15 at Virgil Junior High School, 152 N. Vermont Ave.

Saturday afternoon, Feb. 19 at John Burroughs Junior High, 600 S. McCadden Place.

"SOUTH TO SIESTA LAND" a color motion picture of out-of-the-way parts of Mexico by Fran William Hall.

AUDUBON CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

664 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte . . . Phone FORrest 0-1872

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AUDUBON
WEEK

Celebration featuring the 50th Anniversary
of the
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1955
APRIL
24-30
NATION WIDE

Special Event Day - - - Audubon's Birthday - April 26

Plan to participate - - - - Contact your local Society for Program of Events

1955
AUDUBON CAMP OF CALIFORNIA
EIGHTH SEASON
SUGAR BOWL LODGE

A DOOR TO THE OUT-OF-DOORS

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Session I | June 26 - July 9 | Session III | July 24 - August 6 |
| Session II | July 10 - July 23 | Session IV | August 7 - August 20 |
| Session V | | August 21 - September 3 | |



Other Noteworthy Events



California Conservation Week March 7 - 14 Statewide
Sponsored by the California Conservation Council and Cooperators

Wilderness Conference March 18-19 Hotel Claremont, Berkeley
Sponsored by the Sierra Club and Cooperators