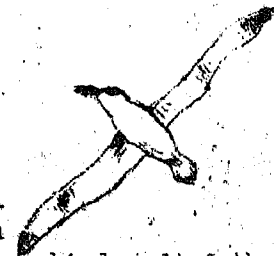




BIRDS ON AN ISLAND NAVAL BASE

Part of an article by George C. Munro
In the November and December numbers
of the Elepaio of the Hawaii
Audubon Society.



I recently spent a week on one of the two small islets where there is a naval base (Midway). On no other island have I seen so many of the little white tern or love bird and of the red-tailed tropic bird. An estimate came to tens of thousands of each of these birds on the two islands. There are 8 or 9 colonies of sooty terns on the two islands and an estimate of their numbers runs into hundreds of thousands.

I was delighted to see how the birds have become accustomed to the activities of man. In the village the Laysan albatrosses after visiting their young scattered around the buildings, walk out on the paved road, having learned that there they have a clear space for their run to take off in flight.

Everything on the island is strictly regulated. No cats are allowed. Any dog caught molesting birds is condemned. Drivers of jeeps and trucks must avoid running down birds that stray into the roadway. The two alluring red tail feathers of the tropic birds must not be plucked. On this island the birds are encouraged in every way.

There is a guiding hand behind all this which is fortunate. Even though it is a federal bird sanctuary, if the large bodies of men stationed there were not under strict regulations it might be disastrous to the birds. As it is, a friendly interest has sprung up in them and there have been preserved many beautiful bird sights: the Bonin Island petrel coming in the middle of August, filling the air with their numbers and voices; the tens of thousands of albatrosses coming in near the end of October and their wonderful dances; the successive immense flocks of sooty terns starting their colonies throughout the season; the white tern flying so gracefully among the trees or joining the red-tailed tropic bird on its sunny day flights; the exercising of the young albatrosses' wings in late June or July.

The little white tern, love bird or fairy tern of universal appeal has the warmest place of any bird in my affection. The plumage is almost pure white, only the midrib of the quill feathers is light brown; it has large black eyes; bill blue and black, legs and toes light blue, webs white. All its colors are dainty; in fact everything about the bird is dainty, even to the fish which it carries crosswise in its bill to feed the young. It can pack nine or ten little fish across its bill from tip to base.

On no island have I seen it in such numbers as on Sand Island of the Midway Islands. A recent estimate of the number there is 20,000. It thrives in human environment and loves trees. Sand Island has been settled since 1707. Trees have been planted, birds encouraged and protected from predatory animals. Man in large numbers have inhabited the island for six years. During this time the white tern have increased prodigiously.

To see this dainty bird flying around among the trees and shrubbery is an inspiring sight. In repose and on its egg it is the picture of innocence.



THE WESTERN Tanager

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

Organized 1910 Incorporated 1951
"To promote the study and protection of birds and other wildlife, plants, soil and water."

MEMBERSHIP

Joint with the National Audubon Society, includes subscription to Audubon Magazine. Regular \$5.00; Sustaining \$10.00; Active \$25.00; Supporting \$50.00; Student \$2.00.

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Mr. Glenn D. Swan,
5401 Weatherford Dr., Los Angeles 56
Mr. Russell E. Wilson,
4548 Farmdale Ave., North Hollywood

A GIFT TO AUDUBON HOUSE

The Society has recently received as a gift the wonderful collection of butterflies and moths prepared by Dr. Lloyd. These are beautifully mounted, as Dr. Lloyd always prepared specimens, and have come with a fine cabinet to house and display them. This collection was given by Dr. Lloyd to Scout Troop 10. As Mrs. Hood has done much to help the troop in their nature work the collection was given through her to the Society.

The County is planning to paint Audubon House. When this is finished, our collections will be displayed to greater advantage than ever.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Life is growth and change and renewal. No sooner do the rains come than old dead vegetation sinks down to enrich the ground, new plants shoot up, trees and shrubs open their swelling buds, young animals and birds are born. "These things will always be the same, for they come from the earth that never changes, they go back into the earth that lasts forever. Only the earth endures, but it endures forever ..."

As in the world of nature, so it is in the affairs of man - and in the Audubon Society administration. There is change and renewal - and we must be prepared for it. So here I call your attention to ---

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

This Committee of the local Audubon Society is appointed in January, submits its list of selected persons for office in 1956-57 at all regular meetings in April. Election takes place at the first regular meeting in May, which will be the Thursday Afternoon Program Meeting of May 3 at the Exposition Community House.

Officers elected for the coming year are then installed at our annual meeting and picnic at Charlton Flats in June.

Members are urged to join in this choosing of our officers. Send suggestions for those you would like to see become officers to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Mrs. J. E. P. Dunn, 1119 Highland Avenue, Los Angeles 19, WEbster 9-7403, before April 1st.

The Society has now over 800 members. There are many activities and a great need for workers to carry on. Let us know if you will help in any capacity, little or large.
Grace Harvard Phillips

The enclosed circular describing the CAMP OUT should be carefully considered. This is to take the place of the regional conference held in other years. It will be instructive and inspirational and a lot of fun. Plan to attend. If you will need transportation, get in touch with the president.

A Matter of Names -- Our complete (yellow) Check List used some names not familiar to many. But these names are now the preferred ones and are used in the Christmas Count given on Page 36.

BIRDS ON AN ISLAND NAVAL BASE - Continued

It makes no nest but lays its egg almost anywhere. Its eggs are often found in crotches of tree branches, or any place offering a secure base. One I saw on a windowsill, one on top of a 4x4 fence post.

The white tern is sacred in the South Seas, and on Niihau of the Hawaiian group. It is almost sacred on Midway, as everyone loves it. The purity of its plumage, beauty of flight, gentleness of its voice and friendliness to man certainly earns reverence for it.

Last October we printed a short article on Goony Birds and Airplanes taken from The Elepaio. The present article is from a series being published in The Elepaio, but first published in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin in 1945. A letter from Mrs. Priscilla Harpham, Editor of the Elepaio, says the birds are still protected and abundant on Midway. The author of the article is Dr. George Munro, a New Zealander who first came to the Hawaiian Islands in the 1890s with a bird expedition and has remained there. He has done notable work in conservation and ornithology in the islands. Now well up in the nineties, he is still alert and active. About five years ago he started a native Hawaiian arboretum on the slopes of Diamond Head to preserve plants in danger of extinction. He visits the arboretum regularly, scattering seed and caring for the plants already established, climbing up and down the slopes.

It should be of interest to us that the President of the Hawaii Audubon Society is Robert Pyle, who still keeps his membership in our society. Bob returned just before Christmas from a meteorological survey trip in the Central Pacific. We can be sure he missed no opportunity of making observations on the birds sighted on the trip. Now Bob is matriculating in the University of Washington for advanced study.

STARLINGS IN CALIFORNIA

The SANDERLING of the Monterey Peninsula Society reports 50 seen east of Gonzales. The OBSERVER of the Sacramento Society reports 80 seen southeast of Woodland, a flock of 1500 fifteen miles southeast of Petaluma and 30 near Gray Lodge.

WHAT'S GONE ON IN THE SOCIETY

Olive Alvey, Historian

FIELD TRIP of December 10 to the Sloughs along Vermont Avenue and Cabrillo Beach. 19 members, led by Miss Ethel Craig, listed 35 species of birds. On Machado Lake were Bonaparte Gulls, one Pipit walking along the shore very near us, many Western and Ring-billed Gulls. On the sloughs we saw American and Snowy Egrets, many Coots, Red-winged Blackbirds and Audubon Warblers among the willows, a Kingfisher and some Ruddy Ducks. There were few shore birds, only a few Black-bellied Plovers and Willets. A few Cormorants and Pelicans were also there.

STUDY CLASS OF JANUARY 5

Dr. Gibson Reaves, Assistant Professor of Astronomy at the University of Southern California, gave a talk on "Star Watching", and showed moving pictures of storms on the sun. He told us that some people think astronomers study things that do not move. But there is much motion to be seen on the heavenly bodies, such as the storms as typical as our own that occur on the sun in the sun spots, not easily seen through the brilliant rays of the sun, but which can be studied during an eclipse of this body. Contrary to general belief, the spots on the sun do not in any way affect the earth.

In order to comprehend the relative sizes of the sun and earth, imagine the earth as a pea placed at one goal post of a football field, and the sun a ball a foot in diameter at the other end of the field. The distance between these represents 92 million miles, which is the distance between us and our sun.

The center of the sun is solid and much hotter than its glowing, gaseous surface. And it has been throwing off these gases for four billion years and there are still enough of these to last at least a hundred billion years.

In spite of all that has been learned of the mysteries of the heavens, there are yet many questions to be solved. The ancients did not know where rain came from. To us the answer to that is simple. In time to come the answer to these other questions will probably seem as simple.

OBSERVATIONS

- GREBES:** Eared and Pied-billed, Malibu Lagoon, Jan. 17, Southwest Club; Red-necked, Santa Barbara, Jan. 8, Arnold Small.
- SWANS, DUCKS:** Whistling Swan, Chatsworth Lake, Dec. 10, A.S.; Snow Geese 3, Bolsa Chica, Nov. 26, A.S. Ring-necked Duck 6, Jan. 6, Johnson Lake, Pasadena, Kay Hardt, Canvas-Back Ducks, K. H., Greater Scaup, Ballona Creek, Dec. 20, A.S. Old Squaw, female, Alamitos Bay, Dec. 29, male, Seal Beach Pier, Dec. 29, A.S.
- EAGLE:** Bald, Bolsa Chica, Nov. 26, A.S.
- RAIL:** Sora, Johnson Lake, Jan. 6, K. H., Clapper, Malibu Lagoon, Jan. 17, Southwest Club.
- CRANE:** Sandhill, Carriso Plain, Jan. 2; 2,000 R. Dudley Ross.
- SHOREBIRDS:** Black Turnstone, flock of 20, Malibu Lagoon, Jan. 17, Southwest Bird Study Club; Red Knot, Bolsa Chica, Dec. 17, Ballona Creek, Dec. 20, A.S.
- JAEGGER:** Parasitic, Seal Beach Pier, Dec. 29, A.S.
- GULL:** Short-billed, 350, Venice, Dec. 26, A.S.
- TERN:** Royal, 200 at Point Dume, Jan. 2, A.S.
- MURRELET:** Ancient, Malibu, 35, Dec. 10, Venice 1, Dec. 26; Marbled, Santa Monica 1, Dec. 23 and 26, A.S.
- MURRE:** Common, 1, Malibu, Dec. 31, Point Dume, Jan. 1, Santa Barbara, Jan. 6, A.S.
- AUKLET:** Rhinoceros, Point Dume, Jan. 1, A.S.
- THRUSH:** Hermit, 4 in yard daily, Gardena, Mrs. R. L. Windle.
- GOLDFINCH:** Dark-backed about a dozen; Lawrence, 4 at bird bath, Gardena, Mrs. R.L.W.
- SPARROW:** Harris, Sycamore Canyon, Dec. 21, A.S.; Fox, Gardena, Mrs. R.L.W., in yard daily since Nov. 17, Los Angeles, K. H.

From the Audubon Center at El Monte, Mrs. Stultz reports the White-breasted Nuthatch feeds daily, especially enjoys the peanut butter on the tree bark.

The annual Christmas Count at the Center on Dec. 26 yielded a list of 74 species. More gulls than ever before, due to the 82 acre lake being excavated by the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Dept. There were 72 Herring, 1 Glaucous-winged, many California and Ring-billed. Others seen were 4 White-tailed Kites, 1 American Bittern, 4 Wilson Snipe, 1 Solitary Vireo, 4 Red-shouldered Hawks, 2 Merlin (Pigeon Hawk), 2 Florida Gallinules, 1 Green-tailed Towhee (which has been in the Sanctuary for two months), 5 Cardinals and many others. A special feature of the day was the convention of Red-winged Blackbirds in the old orchard, over 2,000 of them.

Clark Nutcrackers were reported in our Nov. and Dec. Observations from Palos Verdes Estates by Charlotte McBride. In the SANDERLING of the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society it is reported that Nutcrackers were seen there on October 13, and many times since.

GEESE AND THE FARMER'S WHEAT

The AUDUBON WARBLER publication of the Oregon Audubon Society for November tells of an experiment proving that grazing wild geese benefit a wheat crop. Three fields of winter wheat were planted on the Hog Island Waterfowl Refuge in Virginia. Each field was of about 20 acres and were much the same in every way and in their treatment.

A flock of 2,000 geese fed on one field, a few hundred on the second, none on the third. In early spring the most heavily grazed field showed the best start. When the crops were harvested, the first yielded 33 bushels to the acre, the second 25 and the third only 18.

Geese graze on the blades of wheat, with the root stocks little affected. The droppings of thousands of geese daily added to the fertility of the soil. Since this benefit from grazing geese was reported by the Virginia Commission of Fish and Game, both the Oregon Game Commission and the Washington Department of Game have made similar findings.

CONSERVATION NOTES

Robert Blackstone

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay recently issued a proclamation amending the federal regulations governing oil and gas leasing and exploration on the National Wildlife Refuges, and ending a three-year "stop order" on such activities. This was described in a Department of the Interior release as a "move to strengthen protection of wildlife refuges for wildlife purposes." Though the order was claimed to contain adequate safeguards, it appears that certain protection is afforded only those few refuges which are "indispensable for the preservation of rare or endangered species, remnants of big-game herds and irreplaceable examples of unique animal or plant ecology." Okefenokee N W R in Georgia and Aransas N W R in Texas appear safe under this provision. Others listed as being in this category: Wichita Mountains, Oklahoma; Red Rock Lakes, Montana; Patuxent Research Refuge, Maryland; National Bison Range, Montana; National Elk Refuge, Wyoming; Fort Niobrara Refuge, Nebraska; Sullys Hill National Game Preserve, North Dakota; and certain of the Aleutian and Hawaiian refuges. From the start, conservationists regarded this order with considerable misgiving. Most felt it to be "incompatible with the general philosophy behind the refuges," and feared that it would constitute an "invitation to exploration." This fear was well founded, according to a front page article in the Christian Science Monitor of January 9, where it was reported that some 200 applications for drilling privileges on the nation's wildlife refuges had been activated as a result of the order, and that a congressional investigation is being urged.

A "threat" to Olympic National Park is the subject of a full-page editorial in the January 1956 issue of Nature Magazine. This is a "Memorandum of Facts re. the Olympic National Park" prepared by a firm of counselors in industrial and public relations of Tacoma, Wash. For a discussion of the document, I refer you to the aforementioned editorial. The editor concludes that this attack is too ill-informed and altogether ridiculous to be taken seriously, but it should not be ignored.

OIL COMPANIES AND CONSERVATION

We are all familiar with the attractive booklets of Wild Flowers published each spring by the Richfield Oil Company. Last May we noted in The Tanager that some of the color pictures had been taken by Bill and Mary Hood and others by W. Scott Lewis. We also quoted a paragraph from the booklet on the importance of preserving our wild flowers. Now the Richfield Company in the television series "Mayor of the Town," in place of the usual "company commercials" is inviting representatives of the many conservation groups and interests throughout California to appear with Thomas Mitchell for short personal interviews. These interviews permitted a presentation of the highlights of each organization's contribution to the field of conservation. On a recent program our Pacific Coast Representative, William Goodall, represented the National Audubon Society. Commencing the last week in January and continuing for 32 weeks over 14 television stations throughout California the Richfield Company will have programs emphasizing conservation.

We have probably noticed this past year in some of the national magazines the page advertisements of the Sinclair Oil Company with conservation messages and salutes to conservation organizations. Each with a characteristic picture of one of the National Parks. They have saluted in this way the National Parks Association, Garden Club of America, American Planning and Civic Association, Isaak Walton League, Boy Scouts, American Museum of Natural History and others. Of the National Audubon they speak of "50 years of outstanding accomplishment in the conservation of American wildlife, plants, soil and water." "Perhaps the brightest feather in its cap was the saving of the egret. As a result of the Audubon Society's efforts, the egret was saved from extinction to become a symbol of the Society's many achievements in Conservation." Accompanying this Salute to the National Audubon Society is a fine picture of egrets in the Everglades National Park. Look for and enjoy these Salutes in Time, New Yorker, National Geographic and other magazines.

OUR 18TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The count, which is part of that made annually in all parts of the nation by the National Audubon Society during Christmas week, was made on Monday, December 26. The weather was cloudy with a few showers and visibility was poor. 66 people in 33 parties took part and counted 35,898 birds of 150 species. Three-sevenths of the birds seen were shore and water birds, including 863 loons and grebes, 3735 ducks, 2116 coots, 3809 birds of the plover and sandpiper groups, and 4764 gulls. It was an unusually good year for robins with 3581 being counted from all parts of our area. The most abundant species was the house finch of which 3950 were seen. Others that were abundant were Brewer blackbirds, English sparrows, Audubon warblers, cedar waxwings and Gambel sparrows. The full list, compiled by Mr. James Huffman, who was in charge of the count, follows:

Loons - Common 3, Pacific 4, Red-throated 5; Grebes - Horned 11, Eared 19, Western 806, Pied-billed 11; Brown Pelican 148; Cormorants - Double-crested 43, Brandt 2, Pelagic 13, unidentified 36; Great Blue Heron 2; Egrets - American 6, Snowy 12; Green Heron 3; Cackling Goose 1; Ducks - Mallard 464, Baldpate 32, Pintail 616, Green-winged Teal 30, Shoveller 72, Wood 2, Lesser Scaup 399, Greater Scaup 1, Bufflehead 16, White-winged Scoter 17, Surf Scoter 925, Ruddy 80, Red-breasted Merganser 81; Hawks - White-tailed Kite 1, Sharp-shinned 4, Cooper 5, Red-tailed 35, Red-shouldered 2, Marsh 5; Falcons - Prairie 1, Peregrine 1, Merlin 2, Kestrel 110; California Quail 73; Clapper Rail 1; Coot 2116; Plovers - Snowy 60, Semi-palmated 2, Killdeer 133, Black-bellied 312; Sandpipers - Surf-bird 66, Ruddy Turnstone 2, Black Turnstone 49, Wilson Snipe 8, Long-billed Curlew 1, Hudsonian Curlew 29, Spotted Sandpiper 17, Willet 1052, Greater Yellowlegs 9, Red Knot 1, Least Sandpiper 42, Red-backed Sandpiper 325, Dowitcher 235, Western Sandpiper 247, Godwit 734, Sanderling 415, Avocet 50, Unidentified sandpipers 45; Gulls - Glaucous-winged 85, Western 168, Herring 47, California 949, Ring-billed 2402, Short-billed 335, Bonapart 141, Heermann 290, unidentified 347; Terns - Forster 7, Royal 2; Doves - Band-tailed Pigeon 1, Domestic Pigeon 1506, Chinese Spotted 160, Mourning 579, Ringed Turtle 12; Roadrunner 4; Horned Owl 6, Burrowing Owl 2, White-throated Swift 329; Anna Hummingbird 226; Kingfisher 12; Red-shafted Flicker 173; Acorn Woodpecker 4; Red-breasted Sapsucker 3; Hairy Woodpecker 2, Downy Woodpecker 10, Nuttall Woodpecker 15; Western Kingbird 1; Black Phoebe 109; Say Phoebe 11, Western Pewee 1; Horned Lark 8; Scrub Jay 486; American Raven 4, American Crow 49; Yellow-billed Magpie 1; Mountain Chickadee 6; Plain Titmouse 80; Bushtit 501; White-breasted Nuthatch 2; Red-breasted Nuthatch 2; Wren-tit 204; Wrens - House 5, Bewick 70, Cactus 4, Rock 3; Mockingbird 443, California Thrasher 146; Robin 3581; Hermit Thrush 45; Chestnut-backed Bluebird 54; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 18; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 32; Water Pipit 94; Cedar Waxwing 945; Shrike 76, Hutton Vireo 8; Audubon Warbler 1829; Townsend Warbler 4; Hermit Warbler 1; Yellow-throat 5; English Sparrow 1088; Western Meadowlark 244; Red-winged Blackbird 23; Brewer Blackbird 1772; Purple Finch 64; Cassin Finch 1; House Finch 3950; American Goldfinch 126; Dark-backed Goldfinch 173; Lawrence Goldfinch 3; Green-tailed Towhee 1; Spotted Towhee 80; Brown Towhee 573; Savannah Sparrow 71; Grasshopper Sparrow 5; Lark Sparrow 74; Rufous-crowned Sparrow 7; Oregon Junco 223; Chipping Sparrow 34; Gambel White-crowned Sparrow 848, Golden-crowned Sparrow 91; Fox Sparrow 10; Lincoln Sparrow 2; Song Sparrow 174; and never seen on the Christmas count before two Murrelets, the Ancient and Marbled, one each.

Mr. Huffman adds many thanks to the participants who gave their time, and this year for the first time 50¢ each to make the publishing of the count possible. I am especially grateful to George Hastings and my son, Jimmy, for help in the compiling, to Herb Clarke and Jim Clements for passing on their experience in making counts, to Arnold Small and Alma Stultz in suggesting participants, to Reg Julian for the dinner arrangements, to Elizabeth Patterson for mimeographing and to Gudrun Pepke for publicity. The full list of those participating will be published in the Audubon Field Notes

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY, 1956

- February 2, Thursday, AFTERNOON PROGRAM MEETING. 1:30 in Exposition Community House, 3990 Menlo Ave., corner of Santa Barbara Avenue in Exposition Park.
 Talk - "LIFE ZONES OF CALIFORNIA" by Mrs. Mary V. Hood, who prepared the admirable leaflet on Life Zones which the local Audubon Society distributes. The talk will be illustrated by kodachrome slides of the plants and animals found at the varying elevations - zones.
- February 7, Tuesday. EVENING PROGRAM. 7:45 in Long Hall, Plummer Park.
 Mr. James Clements will talk on BIRDS OF THE HIGH SEAS; the identification and natural history of Pelagic Birds.
 Skins of these birds will be on display from 7:30.
- February 11, Saturday. FIELD TRIP. To the Los Angeles Zoo, Griffith Park. Meet at 9:00 A.M. at the entrance to the zoo. We will study the caged birds and wild life found near. Bring your binoculars. We will leave in time for the Screen Tour.
- February 16, Thursday. FIELD TRIP. To Cabrillo Beach and Museum. Meet at 8:45 at the end of the number 6 bus line, 116th Street and Vermont Avenue, where autos will pick up those needing transportation.
 Mr. John Olguin, Director of the Museum will conduct the group on the newly marked Nature Trail before lunch and through the museum afterwards.
 Mrs. Dorothy Bush will lead a bird walk.
 For reservations call Miss Edna Burt, PLYmouth 5-1044 or Mrs. Phillips, REpublic 2-1772.
- February 23, Thursday. STUDY CLASS. Long Hall, Plummer Park at 10 A.M.
 Mr. Kenneth Stager, curator of birds at the County Museum will talk on some birds, showing specimens.
 Mr. George Hastings will talk on the characteristics of a few plant families, showing models of plants of each family.
- February 26, Sunday. FIELD TRIP TO STUDY PELAGIC BIRDS.
 Our boat will leave Norms Landing at the foot of Stearns Wharf in Santa Barbara at 8 A.M. Bring lunch. Coffee will be served on board ship.
 Reservations are \$6.00 for adults, and check must accompany request for reservation due to limited capacity of the boat. Reservations must be in by February 13.
 Contact James F. Clements, 7915 Dalen Street, Downey, TOpaz 2-3374 for reservations or further information.

Anyone interested is welcome to the meetings and trips, which are free except for the boat trip.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS. Tuesday evening at 7:45 in Virgil Junior High School, 153 Vermont Avenue.
 Saturday afternoon at 2:00 in John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 South McCadden Place.
 "NEWFOUNDLAND" by Dick Bird of Regina Saskatchewan.