

# Western Tanager



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## BIRDING IN MEXICO

By R. Dudley Ross

In April of this year, my wife and I, accompanied by Ruth P. Emory, of the staff of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, spent eighteen days birding "south of the border". To do justice to this wonderful trip, the first visit to Mexico for all of us, would require much more space than is available. In this brief report I shall endeavor to give you some of the highlights and, at the same time, provide you with some generalized information which will, I hope, encourage some of you to take a similar trip at some future time.

We made extensive preparations for the trip, it being our experience that the more thorough the groundwork, the more rewarding the results. With a road map of Mexico we planned our route so as to visit as many different habitats as possible, then carefully studied Blake's "Birds of Mexico" and Edwards' "Finding Birds in Mexico" in order to familiarize ourselves with the new species and families to be seen along the route. We also read, with great delight, Sutton's "Mexican Birds", and learned a great many valuable things from "Mexico by Motor", published by the AAA and readily obtained from the Auto Club. We were vaccinated and, as an added precaution, had a variety of "shots", feeling that an ounce of prevention was worth more than the reputed pound of cure.

Crossing at Hidalgo, Texas to Reynosa, in the state of Tamaulipas we were in the land of tamales and tequila, poverty and paradise and birds and more birds. Our route took us south through what Edwards calls the Atlantic Lowlands region and stops were made at various places including Ciudad Victoria, El Mante, Valles, Tamazunchale (referred to facetiously by us "gringos" as Thomas and Charlie) and spent two days in the vicinity of Xilitla, the little Indian village in the mountains which has been made famous ornithologically by Irby Davis and others. South of Tamazunchale we commenced the long ascent to Mexico City, situated at an elevation of 7,400 feet. In the Mexico City area and on the way south to Acapulco, we enjoyed the most wonderful mountain birding we had ever seen. Descending from the mountains we reached Acapulco where we were on the Pacific coast of Mexico for the first time. Here it was quite warm and we were surrounded by an almost unbelievably luxuriant tropical vegetation. Mangos, mamey, papayas, bananas and other exotic fruits grew in tremendous abundance. We were almost 800 miles into the tropics as we had crossed the Tropic of Cancer about 25 miles south of Ciudad Victoria. Here we found birds such as the Rufous-naped Cactus wren, Black-chested Sparrow, Least Pigmy Owl, Orange-breasted Bunting, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater and the Green Violet-ear, the last an unusual hummingbird.

Returning north through the silver city of Taxco, where we bought silver articles at ridiculously low prices, we headed west in the mountains and made an overnight stop at Patzcuaro. Here we found such tasty morsels as the Mountain Trogon, Orange-billed Nighthawk-thrush, Gray-barred Wren, Collared Towhee and White-striped Woodcreeper. This last is like a gigantic Brown Creeper, being nine inches in length.

(Continued on Page 3)

THE WESTERN Tanager

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THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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and water."

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Thursday Field Trips-To be announced.  
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Wednesday.....2-4 p.m.  
Thursday.....2-4 p.m.  
Saturday.....2-4 p.m.  
1st Wednesday.....7:30-8 p.m.  
4th Thursday (Members only)....1-4 p.m.  
Groups by appointment.....Poplar 1-7635

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With this number of the Tanager I want  
to welcome all members and friends of the  
Los Angeles Audubon Society to a new year  
of activities.

In common with most organizations with  
a large membership, this Society enjoys  
the active participation of only a rela-  
tively small percentage of its members.  
This is perhaps inevitable, but I can't  
help feeling that many members who have  
not joined in one or more of our activi-  
ties, just don't realize what they are  
missing.

We have two monthly meetings, one a  
daytime meeting and the other an evening  
meeting. The chairmen in charge of these  
have gone to considerable trouble to  
schedule an interesting series of pro-  
grams with many excellent speakers. If  
you haven't been attending one or both of  
these meetings, by all means plan to do  
so next month: I'm sure you will want to  
become a "regular".

We likewise have two scheduled field  
trips each month; these are planned and  
led by expert "birders", but are by no  
means restricted to such. Experts and  
tyros alike attend and enjoy them. In ad-  
dition to these, charter bus trips to  
places of interest will be announced from  
time to time in the Tanager.

I think you'll agree that our program  
of activities is sufficiently varied to  
have an appeal for almost anyone who has  
an interest in nature. I sincerely hope  
we shall see a great many new faces in  
our various groups this season.

The Audubon Screen Tours which this  
Society sponsors are not only the highest  
quality entertainment, but are a poten-  
tial source of income to enable the Soci-  
ety to carry on its educational and con-  
servation work more effectively. Rising  
costs have made it more and more difficult  
to do more than break even. Now, more  
than ever, your support is needed for  
this program. You will soon be receiving  
in the mail an application form and a  
copy of the program, which I am sure you  
will agree is a superlative one, and a  
genuine bargain in high quality enter-  
tainment. Don't fail to get your season's  
tickets.

Robert E. Blackstone

BIRDING IN MEXICO - continued.

That is, it acts like a creeper as it climbs the trunks of trees but it has some lively olive-brown and chestnut coloring and, believe it or not, it has a song which resembles that of the Canyon Wren!

After leaving the famous old city of Guadalajara, we once more descended to lower altitudes and were in the Pacific Lowlands region, where one finds many birds not present in the Atlantic Lowlands. We stopped at San Blas, a small coastal town which is gaining a reputation as a resort and which we reached by a twenty-mile drive through a dense tropical jungle. Then we went up the west coast, making stops at Acaponeta, Mazatlan, Culiacan and Guaymas, crossing the border into the good old U.S.A. once again at Nogales, Ariz. after covering over 3,500 mi. in Mexico.

During our eighteen day visit we saw 318 species of birds, of which just 120 were "lifers" or new ones for us, and became acquainted with ten new families of birds, which is always a great thrill. Altogether we saw 14 species of herons, 22 hawks, 10 doves, 8 parrots, 7 swifts, 14 hummingbirds, 2 motmots, 2 trogons, 4 kingfishers, 2 woodcreepers, 2 cotingas, 26 flycatchers and 7 species of jays, plus many others, too numerous to mention here.

To be suddenly plunged into the midst of a completely new avifauna is an exciting experience. It may sound bewildering and one does have greater identification problems than he would at home in familiar surroundings but these identification problems will be reduced in almost direct proportion to the amount of study and preparation made beforehand. Lack of knowledge of Spanish is no barrier; in any fair-sized city and in all hotels and motels, there are English-speaking people and in any gasoline station such phrases as "fill the tank" and "check the oil" are readily understood. One does have to exercise reasonable caution in what one eats and drinks but this is all explained in "Mexico by Motor". The roads are nearly all quite good and, with the exception of Mexico City, almost everything is amazingly cheap. Even in Mexico City excellent accommodations can be had at a low price. I shall be very glad indeed to help anyone contemplating a Mexican trip, from laying out a route to fitting your time budget

to suggesting overnight accommodations. Don't hesitate to communicate with me if you wish such assistance at any time.

The point is, don't permit the so-called obstacles to prevent your making a never-to-be-forgotten trip below the border.

#### YOUTH TRAINING

The Magazine Department - Westways - of the Automobile Club of Southern California is lending travel slides for hospital and orphan asylum work. These slides will be used at the Shrine and Convalescent Hospitals for Children. I wish to thank Mr. Van Court, Manager of the Travel Department, and Mr. J. Harden, head of training speakers, and Mr. Davis, head of the Tourist Department, for their cooperation and assistance.

I also wish to publically thank Dr. James Harvey, the head of the Micro Biology Department of State College, for sending a student a month (for over a year) to two hospitals to give talks on nature.

Elsa Schwartz has gone regularly once a month, and often weekly, to talk in our Junior Audubon Nature Clubs in the above named hospitals and in two orphanages, the L. A. Orphanage and the Volunteers of America. The teachers at both hospitals approve of our work and at Shrine have secured permission from the School Board to let us have the last hour of the teaching period on Wednesday for Nature Club.

The children at the orphanages eagerly await our talks on nature, and we hope to add other homes to our schedule.

--Irma S. Hecht,

Youth Training Chairman

The SUNDAY FIELD TRIP on September 22 will be to the Maxton Brown Sanctuary at Oceanside and points enroute to see Wood Ibis, Elegant Terns and early wintering ducks and shorebirds. The group will meet at 9:00 a.m. just south of the traffic circle on Route 101-A in East Long Beach.

-- Leader Jim Huffman,

FRontier 2-7124

## AUDUBON HOUSE

We are looking forward to a great year in the Society. To start things off, this fall, we are participating in the Fiesta, a tradition for eleven years and which will be held Sunday, September 15 at Plummer Park. Each organization which meets in Plummer Park has been asked to set up an exhibit showing the activities of it's members. In addition to sponsoring an exhibit, Audubon House will open it's doors to the public from noon until the evening program. It will be shown as the old historical home of Don Eugenio Plummer as well as the Headquarters of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. This should be a fine opportunity for our members to visit the Park, see Audubon House, Long Hall where our Thursday morning meetings are held, and Great Hall where our Wednesday evening programs will be given this year. Please watch the newspapers for announcement of time and activities.

Over sixteen hundred adults and children visited Audubon House this year. The listing of our telephone in the L. A. directory should enable us to serve many more people. We hope that all of our members who are elementary teachers or youth leaders will make use of the fine material available through the Audubon Junior Clubs. We have a complete kit at Headquarters and will be glad to show and explain the work to any one or group of leaders.

As more youth groups make appointments to visit the Museum it will be necessary to increase our staff of workers and speakers. It is not necessary for one to be a specialist in any field, the main requirements being an interest in children and a desire to further the study of birds, animals habitats and conservation. Any member who has a few hours a month to give to this type of work is urged to contact the Curator at Headquarters, in person or by telephone, HO 7-9495, on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 2-4 p.m. or telephone FO 1-7635 evenings.

The sale material will be increased as the demand is increased. Among the books kept in stock are Mrs. Hood's Outdoor Hazards, real and fancied, Mr. Hastings's Trees of Santa Monica, Mr. Pyle's Annotated Field List of the Birds of Southern California, Peterson's Field

Guide of the Pacific Coasts. Nature Aids; Bird Leaflets, bird and animal cards, nature games and check lists. Calls have been coming in for humming-bird feeders, bird calls, and stationary. If we have enough inquiries for these items we will try to add them to our supply. Our Sales Chairman, Miss Ida Kizler, will be glad to order books for members. The profit from sales helps to increase our treasury and enables the Society to participate in more activities.

--Mrs. Russell E. Wilson, Curator

For those members who have an affection for books this appeal is especially directed. It is also meant for members who may wish to participate in some way in the Society but have not yet found the right means of expression.

Your library is in possession of approximately twelve books that are badly in need of being rebound and cannot be made available for circulation until this is accomplished. There are also some six paper bound volumes by Arthur Cleveland Bent on life histories of various birds. Because of the present paper binding these books are kept in the magazine and pamphlet collection and many members are not aware the library possesses them. For the preservation and protection of these fine books rebinding is highly desirable.

Several bookbinders have been contacted and the most reasonable quotations given were between \$3.00 to \$5.00 per book. Since the purpose of this appeal is to request aid in having these various books properly bound, a contribution of any size would be a step towards accomplishment and each member would gain through another's generosity.

Donations may be sent to the Treasurer:

Miss Esther F. Johnson  
1250-1/2 Holt Avenue  
Los Angeles 35, Calif.

Helen Sandmeyer  
Librarian

## BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Birders on both east and west coasts anxiously await the arrival of August which brings the end of the summer doldrums as far as birding is concerned. July is probably the dullest month of the year from the standpoint of the amateur ornithologist and July 1957 was no exception. The Ross's found 22 White-tailed Kites at the Ventura County Gun Club near Oxnard on July 21 and this would be notable at any season of the year. These birds probably represented three to four family groups which had been attracted by the rodents in that area. As the nesting season of the Kites draws to a close, these birds tend to gather in such groups of families at favorable feeding areas. No known pelagic observations were obtained during July for the southern coast, however, at Point Sal, Santa Barbara Co. on August 3, some 22,000 Sooty Shearwaters were counted as they streamed past the Point in their northward migration (ED). August generally marks the beginning of the southward shorebird migration, the influx of Wood Ibis from Mexico, the anticipated arrival of Elegant Terns, the appearance offshore of numerous Jaegers, and the possibility of something really fancy of a tropical nature to appear off our coast.

Seven Wood Ibis were at Lt. Maxton Brown Sanctuary near Oceanside August 6 and 7 (R.&M. Blackstone) and a small number of Elegant Terns were also noted as well as a few Black Terns. Indications are now that we can anticipate a good flight of Elegant Terns this late summer and early fall. Some 100 Elegant Terns were at Bolsa Chica in mid-August, about an equal number at Malibu Lagoon August 18 (ED, R. Arbib), and more than 450 were counted at Point Mugu estuary on that same date. The shorebird migration began to accelerate by mid-August and large numbers of Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew and Black-bellied Plover (many in stunning breeding plumage) assembled at choice areas.

No large flights of Phalaropes as yet, but numerous small flocks here and there along the coast. Small number of Black Brant remained throughout the summer from San Diego to Point Mugu. A single Solitary Sandpiper was at Malibu Lagoon August 11 (R.D. Ross) Four Pectoral Sand-

pipers were at Bolsa Chica on the same date (J. Tramantano)

I must take this opportunity to report on an exceptional pelagic trip which I experienced to the east end of San Clemente Island August 13. Boarding a sport fishing boat at San Pedro we made the 55 mile run in 5-1/2 hours. Dawn was breaking as we were well across the San Clemente channel and pelagic birds were everywhere. They became more numerous as we approached the eastern end of San Clemente Is. It might be noted here that very few pelagic birds were seen in the San Pedro channel on the return trip late that afternoon.

The following is a partial list of species seen; Black Petrel (31 - some very close to the boat), Sooty Shearwater (437), Pink-footed Shearwater (300), Black-footed Albatross (2), Red Phalarope (18), Xantus Murrelet (2), Common Murre (2), Cassin Auklet (4), Pigeon Guillemot (11), Sabine Gull (2), Elegant Tern (41), Parasitic Jaeger (1), and SKUA (1). This illustrates, I think, the need for more extensive pelagic observations during the summer months, particularly well offshore.

The Field Notes editor would welcome all bird records of interest to make this column more complete and informative. Please phone or write, and if the bird is especially interesting, don't delay.

Arnold Small, 3028 Cavendish Drive,  
Los Angeles 64. VE 7-2272

## SOME CONSERVATION NOTES

We have had a letter from the office of the Governor informing us that AB 2831, revising Fish and Game Code sections relating to birds and mammals, was signed by him July 8. Now all of the hawks and owls are protected by law in California, which was our principal objective in sponsoring this legislation. In addition, the California condor, bald eagle, white-tailed kite and trumpeter swan are to be classed as "fully protected"; not even scientific collecting of them will be permitted. All non-game birds are to be protected with the exception of the English sparrow, crow,

black-billed magpie, scrub jay, Steller's jay and the starling. Protection of all our hawks and owls is something we have wanted for a long time, and is a big step forward. Of course, this is not the whole answer to the problem; much more will have to be done educationwise.

The matter of repeal of the Mt. San Jacinto Winter Park Authority Act has been reopened, and is reported to have been referred to an interim committee of the Assembly Committee on Conservation, Planning and Public Works. There is hope that we may at last attain our objective.

At its meeting in Los Angeles on July 26, the State Park Commission considered Senate Concurrent Resolution 128, which directed the Commission to reinstate all grazing leases in Anza-Borrego State Park and to open certain areas in Cuyamaca State Park to grazing. The Commission rejected these proposals for several reasons, chief among them being that State Park lands cannot legally be used for other than State Park purposes.

In Congress, conservationists lost a round when the legislators favored a series of small private dams in Idaho over a single high dam in Hells Canyon. Other conservation losses are the authorization of the Bruce Eddy development and the failure of Congress to enact a billboard control bill to protect the new interstate highway system. The fate of the wilderness protection bills has not been heard.

---Robert E. Blackstone.

A review of some of the Society's activities which took place after the last Tanager went to press include:

APRIL 25, THURSDAY MORNING CLASS. We regret that only 18 members turned out to hear Dr. Howard Hill, Curator of Marine Zoology at the L. A. County Museum. His subject "Sea Life along our Shores" was a thrilling account of what we may see of the unusual when we walk along the beach.

MAY 23, THURSDAY MORNING MEETING: Mr. Kenneth Stager, as usual, chose an absorbing topic - "Ecology of Birds".

\* \* \* \* \*

Falcon is Latin from Falco, a stork, because of the curved bill.

MAY 26, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP to Mt. Pinos was enjoyed by about 50 persons. Hopes of seeing Condors brought guests and persons from other groups interested in nature study. Unfortunately, no Condors appeared but along with the more common mountain birds there were Brewer's Sparrows, Nutcrackers, Siskins, Western Tanager, Townsend Solitaire and Red Crossbills nesting. A Golden Eagle was seen on the return trip.

Tuesday, JUNE 4, DINNER AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS in Long Hall at Plummer Park. Attendance numbered about 80. We were pleased to have Mr. & Mrs. Bill Goodall, Mr. & Mrs. Stultz, Mr. & Mrs. Duff, Miss Salmon and Mr. Hastings. We missed having Mrs. Hastings there to make the coffee.

Mrs. Charlotte McBride, our retiring president, turned the gavel over to Mr. Robert Blackstone, the new president and introduced the new Board to the members.

After dinner Mr. Arnold Small showed a film of the Macris Expedition to Brazil, It had been loaned by the L. A. County Museum through Mr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Ornithology at the Museum, and a member of the expedition.

JUNE 20, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Charlton Flats. There were 11 bus cancellations but 18 members braved the heat and dangers of forest fires. Late rains had brought forth many wildflowers and the birds were busy feeding their young. Mr. & Mrs. Robert Blackstone and daughter Dwynwyn were present and Mr. Blackstone outlined plans for the Society for the coming year.

#### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Mary Rose,  
4321 Clarissa Ave. Los Angeles 27  
Miss Alyce L. Larriou,  
6221 Saylin Lane, Los Angeles 42  
Mrs. Neal B. Burkness,  
1748 Griffith Park Ave., L. A. 26

The new Pacific Coast Field Record Cards are now available at the Pacific Coast Office of the National Audubon Society, 2426 Bancroft Way, Berkeley 4, Cal. Prices are as follows: 25 cards (min. sale) \$1.25, 50 cards, \$2.00, 100 cards, \$3.50. Mail orders will be handled promptly.