

Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 24

April 1958

Number 8

A RIVER TRIP IN FLORIDA

Mrs. Warren Carpenter

April 2 promised to be warm and sunny as we embarked for our boat trip on the St. John's River in Central Florida. Boat-tailed Grackles squeaked and whistled about us while we loaded our provisions and binoculars in the little boat. In the distant grasses, spots of white, slaty blue or grey piqued our curiosity and hurried our preparations.

We started out upstream from the point where the old Bithlo cutoff, now Florida 520, crosses the St. John's. Flocks of Ring-billed Gulls and Black Skimmers were resting from their morning labors on the sandy flats along the river. In the current paddled a flock of Lesser Scaup ducks, and the ever-present "Poolie-Doos," or Coots, greeted us with their usual squawks and excitedly ran away from us over the water when Blue Herons and American Egrets rose gracefully into the air. We learned to know the American Egret at a distance by its curious habit of holding its head at an angle with bill pointing upwards; the other all-white waders usually poised their bills downwards. The most common of these in this area was the Snowy Egret, with its comical yellow feet, and the young of the Little Blue Heron, which are pure white in spite of the fact that the adult is slate blue.

About a quarter of a mile from the boathouse we entered Lake Poinsett, six miles long and three wide, but seeming much larger because of the flatness of the marshlands surrounding it. We skirted the eastern shore for some time, seeing many Herons, Egrets, Grackles, Red-wing Blackbirds, Double-crested Cormorants and Water Turkeys (anhingas). Overhead flew Ospreys and Turkey Vultures and groups of Glossy Ibis. There were few settlements along the lake, probably because of the broad expanses of marsh around it. One piece of higher ground supported a fishing camp, another a clump of trees. We decided to rest a bit, so landed on the latter and discovered an abandoned house, fallen to ruins, hidden among the Australian pines (Casuarinas) that had evidently been planted there long ago. A few empty beer cans testified to the recent presence of humans, and a turtle shell, about two feet in diameter, suggested one reason for their having been there. Watching us silently from a piney branch was a Chuck-will's Widow, the first we had ever seen. Offshore a Kingfisher danced and sparkled in the still hot air until he fell, rocklike, upon his prey. All around us in the reeds the Blackbirds and Grackles shrieked and grated in their curious way, so that we had the feeling of being in an island of coolness and quiet amid the racket.

After refreshing ourselves, we continued to the mouth of Lake Poinsett. It would have been difficult to discern it in that marshy land if it had not been marked by a fisherman's hut, put on stilts to avoid the frequent floods. Standing near the hut, with great unconcern for either our boat or the two fishermen nearby, was a Louisiana Heron, easily distinguished from the Little Blue Heron by its snowy belly. According to Peterson, this is the most common heron in Central Florida, although we naturally noticed many more of the white waders. We slowly made our way up the river, but the midday heat was trapped between its banks, and we were soon most uncomfortable in the still air. Blackbirds, Herons and Egrets continued in evidence, but there seemed to be fewer birds than we had seen previously. Using this as an excuse to

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THE WESTERN Tanager

Free to members....Others \$1.50 annually
 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings
 Editor.....Mrs. Fern Shelford
 3315 W. 41st St., L.A. 8.....AX 4-0410

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 National Audubon Society in-
 cludes subscription to Audubon Magazine.
 Regular \$5; Sustaining \$10; Active \$25;
 Supporting \$50; Student \$2.

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 Sunday Field Trips....Mr. James Huffman
 Thursday Field Trips....To be Announced
 Saturday Field Trips...Miss Ethel Craig

AUDUBON HOUSE

Headquarters of L.A. Audubon Society,
 7377 Santa Monica Blvd....HO 7-9495.

Open: Wednesday, Thursday and
 Saturday - 2-4 p.m.

3rd Wednesday - 7:30-8 p.m.

4th Thursday (members only)

9-10 a.m., 1-4 p.m.

Groups by appointment.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The National Audubon Society is one of the oldest and largest national conservation organizations. We, as members, can be justly proud of that fact. Considering the population of the United States, however, our membership is not large, not nearly large enough to be truly effective at promoting our ideals. Nor is our branch large in relation to the population of metropolitan Los Angeles.

There is certainly no particular virtue in size, of itself; I'm sure few of you will disagree with me on that. Indeed, there are some very obvious disadvantages in having a large organization. However, in numbers there is strength, and it is plain that, if we are to accomplish our aims satisfactorily, we must continue to build our membership.

This society has a splendid opportunity, in a great center of population such as Los Angeles, to do some very worthwhile work in conservation and education. Only by having a large membership, really interested in promoting Audubon ideas, can we be successful in making our influence felt, however.

With the foregoing in mind, the Executive Board of the Los Angeles Audubon Society decided, at its February meeting, to launch a drive for more members. We are asking all members in this city to take part in this. Enclosed with your Tanager this issue, you will find a copy of a brochure outlining the advantages of Audubon membership, together with a membership application blank. We are counting on each of you to put these in the hands of a prospective member.

Placing one of these brochures where it can do some good is something that each member can certainly do. If you can use more than one, they can be obtained from our headquarters in Plummer Park. Let us all get behind this drive and make it an unqualified success.

Robert E. Blackstone.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

We need more new members for the Audubon Society and each of us can do something about it.

We enjoy our Audubon magazine published by the National Society; our own local publication "The Tanager;" opportunities to enjoy wildlife sanctuaries; participation in evening and daytime meetings with wonderful programs; organized field trips during the week and weekends; access to Audubon Center at El Monte where we can receive the counsel of staff experts on nature study programs, conservation, exhibits, etc.; also the Audubon House at Plummer Park, where there is a fine library and exhibit plus counseling. These and many more opportunities are ours as members. How about passing this information on to some one else and in this way each one secure a new member? It is very much worthwhile so let's try it!

--Iola R. Moore, Registrar of Members,
278 Bronwood Avenue, Los Angeles 49,
GRanite 2-7591

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Pauline Brand,
2027-1/2 Park Drive, Los Angeles 26
Mrs. John Robert Carlston,
5306 Irvine Ave., North Hollywood
Mrs. John A. Corn,
724 - 30th St., Manhattan Beach
Mr. Tom Emmel,
5341 West Blvd., Los Angeles 43
Mrs. Catherine B. Farquhar,
1365 W. 20th St., Los Angeles 7
Mr. Leo Klein,
3204 Castle Heights Ave., L.A. 34
Mr. Elmer W. Meyer,
13908 So. Arcturas, Gardena, Calif.
Mr. Ned Oshins,
10559 Van Paraiso St., L.A. 34
Mr. B. St. Denis,
8496 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles 46
Mr. Earle Vought, Jr.
5115 E. Carson, Long Beach 8

AUDUBON HOUSE

The last two months have been busy ones at Audubon House. The new bird exhibit set up by Mr. Herman Beck is a fine addition to our Museum and a great help to our speakers who are helping young people with their nature projects. In the March issue of the Girl Scout News there appeared a paragraph announcing our invitation to visit our Museum and to have our members help scouts with their nature badge work. We have on our calendar appointments for fourteen groups and calls are coming in each week. Our telephone is busy with calls from people interested in birds and conservation asking about the membership and activities of the National and Los Angeles Audubon Societies. We have had visitors from Pittsburg, Pa. Audubon Society, from Societies in New York and Texas. Dr. George Marshall, Editor of THE LIVING WILDERNESS (publication of the Wilderness Society) visited our Library. Mr. Will Gould, a writer for the Lassie TV series has visited Audubon House for verification and correction of material on birds to be used in his scripts. A membership file, fact file, Audubon Jr. Club file and an information file on good birding areas in and around L.A. are being compiled.

Donations for new books to be added to our library are coming in and more will be written about that later. In the Library our members and friends will find conservation material for their perusal including "Sierra Club Bulletin" and "The Living Wilderness." Also for the members' use are displayed the bulletins of the branch Audubon Societies in our area.

Five new color slides taken by W. Scott Lewis were donated by Mrs. Ruth McCune.

On Sunday, June 8, the Friends of Plummer Park are holding a Fair. Exhibits and entertainment by the many groups meeting in Plummer Park will be featured. Keep this date in mind and plan to visit on that afternoon and evening. Any member wishing to help with this project may get in touch with the Headquarters Chairman at Audubon House.

---Marian Wilson, Curator.

BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Suddenly the weather, which had been quite uninteresting, has become the chief topic of conversation among birders. The rainfall totals for the general Los Angeles basin were more than double last year's figures by March 15. More than 15 inches had fallen in some land areas (compared with a normal of about 11 inches and 6 inches for the same period last year). The snow level in the local mountains was at times down to 4500 feet but snow below 6500 feet melted quickly as warm rains fell during the daytime. Nevertheless, the snowpack in the mountains was considerable. All of this will no doubt have important effects upon local bird life, although not immediately. In fact no changes in local bird life were readily apparent after the storms.

Muddy water flowing into the ocean from swollen streams caused roily conditions close to the beaches and very few fish-eating species (such as Western Grebes, Eared Grebes, Loons, etc.) were to be found in this immediate area until the waters settled and fish could again move into these brown waters. If the patterns of other wet seasons is to be repeated this spring and summer we should see a magnificent wildflower display (triggered by the early rains of October and November), great amount of seed produced, heavy growth of herbage in spring, and large numbers of insects. All of this bodes well for birdlife as an ample food supply seems to be in the offing. With any luck, we should have a most successful nesting season for the gallinaceous birds and the passerines.

The most apparent changes in local bird life during March were the departure of the dabbling ducks during late February and early March, the thinning out of the flocks of Cedar Waxwings, the influx of small numbers of Varied Thrushes, the presence of small flocks of Starlings near Ventura and larger numbers in Death Valley and China Lake. Small numbers of Lewis Woodpeckers were in Death Valley during the late winter. The Grey-headed Junco was still coming to the Clarke's feeder by early March.

---Arnold Small,
3028 Cavendish Drive, L.A.

(Note: Correction for March 1958 Western Tanager, this column, should read as follows - the continued mild weather which prevailed into mid-February did not encourage many of the more interesting water birds to move into our region.)

PARK PROPOSED FOR TUJUNGA WASH

No doubt many L.A. Audubon Society members are familiar with the Big Tujunga Wash near Sunland. Perhaps you remember it as a good place to look for Cactus Wrens, Phainopeplas or other desert birds, or for the fine stands of yuccas in season. Gravel-pit operators want to exploit the area, but residents of Sunland are opposing this, and propose instead that it be made into a park or preserve, the intent being that it will remain "unimproved." The usual park developments would in any case be impractical, since it is subject to flooding.

Several local conservation groups are backing the park proposal, as well as a national organization, the Nature Conservancy. The executive board of the L.A. Audubon Society at its February meeting passed a resolution in favor of such a park. The matter is under consideration by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission.

1958 ANNUAL DINNER

Plans are being made for the Los Angeles Audubon Society's second annual dinner, to be held June 18. It is planned to hold it this year in a restaurant in the Hollywood or West Hollywood area. This will be the occasion for the Installation of New Officers, and an excellent program will climax the evening. The cost per person is expected to be about \$2.50. You will not want to miss this event, so keep that date open - June 18.

Great excitement in the Monterey Bay area recently was caused by the visit of a King Eider Duck which was seen paddling around Fisherman's Wharf. It was the only one ever known to visit that area, as these birds are dwellers of the Arctic.

An opportunity is available to members.

The Audubon Center of Southern California, 1000 N. Durfee Ave., El Monte, has a Service Département, through which they may purchase books, pamphlets, leaflets, charts, cards, games, etc., on all subjects of nature. Also birdcalls, bird figurines, feeders, binoculars, records, stationery and index tabs for Peterson's books. For National Audubon Society members there are car decals, arm emblems and pins. Price lists available upon request.

Seventy children from the fifth grade at the Washington School in Pomona participated in a tree-planting ceremony at the Audubon Center in El Monte, in commemoration of Bird and Arbor Day. This special celebration was held in addition to the school children's scheduled tour through the Center's educational nature museum and field trip through the wildlife sanctuary. Many birds were observed by the group, and the weather was clear and sunny following a recent storm.

Each of the children present helped to plant a Black Cottonwood Tree in the sanctuary by shoveling soil. As part of the program, three class members gave information talks to the group. Roy Applewhite presented a description of the natural history and uses of the Black Cottonwood tree, while Steve Taylor and Delores Banalas spoke about the history and significance of Bird and Arbor Day in the United States, with special reference to California.

To help you and our common cause, we now have Audubon decals for your car, as well as arm emblems, for sale at Audubon House.

The Audubon Western Bird Guide and Peterson's Western Bird Guide are also available. Our nature games are just the thing for gifts for the young members of the family. All sales materials are available before and after the regular meetings at Audubon House.

---Ida Kizler, Sales Chairman

AUDUBON CAMP OF CALIFORNIA 1958--Opening dates for the five 2-week sessions will be June 22, July 5, July 20, August 3 and August 17. Register NOW.

Have you sent in your reservation blank for the Audubon Camp Reunion at Audubon Center, El Monte on April 27th?

Just about everyone has agreed that the Thursday Morning Meeting on February 27 was a real study class. Mrs. Isabella Bright spoke of the evolution of birds and how their bodily characteristics have enabled them to survive, Mr. George T. Hastings also used survival as his subject, but this was the survival of plants. It was a pleasure to hear two such able speakers on these related subjects.

---Olive Alvey

Each month several copies of the WESTERN Tanager are returned because members fail to notify us of their change of address. We do not want to lose track of you. Please send your change of address to Miss Iola Moore, 278 Bronwood Ave., L.A. 49.

Mrs. Jesse L. Morain sent in an interesting item about the Sacred Peepul Tree of Burma. It is believed to be inhabited by spirits and small houses are built beside each tree to make the spirits more comfortable. Pilgrims donate "rent money" lest the spirits be evicted. One of these trees can be seen in Lafayette Park and another in Elysian.

A Federal Wildlife Preserve to be known as the Mariposa Refuge will be established in the Lost Hills area of North Kern County within the next few months. Rep. Harlan Hagen said the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has given final approval to the proposal, clearing the way for government purchase of the 10,240 acres involved, at a cost of \$500,000, to be financed by Duck Stamp Revenue.

The preserve will be supervised by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

RIVER TRIP IN FLORIDA - continued.

escape the heat, we turned back toward the lake.

A breeze had sprung up while we were on the river so that our trip along the west side of the lake was more comfortable. Either because of the wind, or because we had to stay far from shore, we saw few birds on this portion of our trip. We were beginning to believe that the hunt was over as we approached the trees which served as our landmark when we glimpsed a large brown bird with a white head, perched on an ancient fence post in the shallows. Imagine our delight on seeing its white tail when it took wing! Yes, it was Bald Eagle. Spotting it rekindled our interest, and we decided to continue down the river.

To keep on the main course was difficult at first, and in spite of our efforts to observe the currents we did become sidetracked and had a few bad moments until we found the main channel once more. The land here is of such a sameness and the river's course so obscure that many fishermen have been lost in the area, though few permanently so. We had ample time to observe the abundance of birds along the river banks and in the nearby marshes. Herds of cattle grazed on spots of higher ground, and frequently with them were Snowy Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Wood Ibis and Little Blue Herons, feeding like chickens about their hooves. On nearly every fence post perched an unpleasant Fish Crow. In the higher reeds or flying overhead in small flocks were the curious-looking White Ibis with their down-curved red bills and red legs. The juveniles were even more strange, as their bills were a deep transparent pink. Flocks of Blue-winged Teal were common everywhere. Besides the Boat-tailed Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds, we saw both Myrtle and Palm Warblers perching in the reeds.

Wandering down the aimless river under the warm sun gave us a feeling of deep peace. Though we were never more than five miles from the highway, we could see nothing but endless stretches of marsh around us and could almost believe that we had dropped out of the civilized world completely into one of water, reed and sky. Several times we heard a commotion in the tall reeds and located its originator in time to see a Black-crowned Night Heron

take wing. Walking inconspicuously among the reeds were Limpkins, brown ibis-like birds with white speckles. Where the banks were bare and sandy, Spotted Sandpipers ran back and forth, while around shallow pools where the grass had been trampled by cattle we could see Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. A March Hawk flying overhead was our last new find of the day.

SCREEN TOUR

Last Screen Tour of the season will be Tuesday, April 22, 7:45 p.m., at Virgil Junior High School and Saturday, April 26, 2:00 p.m. at John Burroughs Junior High. "Monsoon Mosaic" by Dr. Telford H. Work which was to have been shown will be replaced by "Ranch and Range" by Albert J. Wool. Because of a severe epidemic, Dr. Work is unable to leave India, so Mr. Wool has consented to pinch-hit on the dates scheduled.

Mr. Albert J. Wool grew up on his father's mountain ranch in California and imbues his colorful film with his own experience as rancher and naturalist. His keen interest in wildlife began as a boy. He discovered and climbed to his first eagle's nest at the age of ten. While at Stanford, his knowledge of natural history led him to special work on problems involving conservation of deer and the economic importance of Calif. birds of prey.

Our fellow member, Bob Sandmeyer, prepared a very artistic display for our headquarters in Plummer Park for National Wildlife Week, March 16-22. Mr. Sandmeyer has been most generous in offering his time and talents; he also prepared a display for us for the Fiesta at Plummer Park last year, and has agreed to design the Audubon Societies' display for the Los Angeles County Fair next September.

Many of us have stopped in the past to scan the lagoons at the south end of the Navy's missile station at Point Mugu to see what birds might be there. So far as we know, no one has objected till lately. Miss Craig informs us that this is now definitely taboo; her party was recently stopped by the sheriff and by the shore police.

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Historian.Mrs. Olive Alvey
Registrar of Members.Miss Iola R. Moore, 278 Bromwood Avenue, L.A. 49

CALENDAR FOR APRIL 1958

- April 10 - EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 912 Victoria Avenue.
- April 12 - SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon.
Meet at 9:00 a.m. Drive to Orange, east on Chapman Ave. to Santiago Road.
Turn right and go 8 miles to Silverado Canyon Rd., keep right and go 5
miles to Modjeska Canyon Fork, turn left 1 mile to sanctuary. Bring lunch
and binoculars.
---Ethel Craig, Chairman
- April 16 - WEDNESDAY EVENING MEETING, 8:00 p.m. at Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377
Santa Monica Blvd. Speaker: Jim Huffman. Subject: "Birds in Motion."
Jim has made extensive trips into Arizona and Mexico in search of birds to
photograph and has many of such rarely seen birds as the New Zealand Shear-
water, Rivoli Hummingbird, etc.
---Arnold Small, Chairman
- April 17 - THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Soledad Canyon Camp Grounds, Columbo Lilac Ranch and
Blum Ranch. Our Tanner Bus will leave Los Angeles from Grand Ave. entrance
to Biltmore Hotel, between 5th and 6th Sts., at 8:15 a.m. sharp. Fare \$3.
Please have exact amount. Bring lunch and binoculars. For those who drive,
go San Fernando Rd. to Weldon Jct., right on Palmdale Hwy. to Solamint Jct.
Right up Soledad Canyon to Soledad Public Camp Grounds just beyond Ranger
Station for birding and lunch. Afterward to Columbo Lilac Ranch and Blum
Ranch for apple cider. Mrs. Hoogenboom will identify birds for us. Make
reservations 1 week in advance with Miss Edna Burt, PL 5-1044.
- April 19 - SUNDAY FIELD TRIP to Lower Colorado River at Yuma, Arizona. Birds to be
& 20 expected here are Harris' Hawk, Summer Tanager, Glossy Ibis, Lucy's Warbler,
Ground Dove, White-winged Dove, etc. Drive to Yuma Friday evening-
about a six-hour drive. Group will meet Saturday at 8:00 a.m. at Coronado
Motor Hotel (this is just after you cross the Colorado River bridge on
Highway 80 on left). Make reservations in Yuma if you plan to be there
Friday night. On Saturday we will go to Imperial Dam on the Colorado
River and Mitty Lake near Yuma Test Station. Some of us will camp at Im-
perial Dam on Saturday night - others may want to return to motel in Yuma.
There are good campsites with running water, grass and flush toilets at
Imperial Dam. On Sunday morning at dawn we will go to West Pond for Rails
and possibly Least Grebe and we will leave Yuma at about 9:00 a.m. and
drive to Imperial State Wildlife Refuge near Calipatria, Calif. and will
spend some time looking for Fulvous Tree Ducks, etc. Last stop of day will
be at Salton Sea for Gull-billed Tern and Laughing Gull.
---Arnold Small, Leader - VE 7-2272
- April 24 - THURSDAY MORNING MEETING - 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377
Santa Monica Blvd. Speaker: Mrs. Carolina S. Daugherty. Subject:
"Glimpsing Yucatan, Guatamala and Birds" - illustrated with colored slides.
Mrs. Daugherty is a long time, active member of our Society and served as
Field Leader for many years. She helped with the first Christmas Bird
Count in Los Angeles and has compiled a list of more than 75 birds found
in Forest Lawn.
---Olive Alvey, Chairman