



FINEST THING IN FEATHERS

By Pete Barrett

When my wife saw the smallest bird in the country last summer, she brushed at it in the manner of a person trying to discourage a wasp. She was wearing a red silk bandana which had attracted the attention of a Calliope Hummingbird. Almost faster than the eye could follow, this mite in feathers had streaked from a nearby flower bed to hover, helicopter-like, before the red silk.

A faint but insistent humming emanated from the bird - almost like a delicate aura. It was not surprising that she had mistaken it for a wasp - the creature was fantastically miniature to be wearing feathers. For perhaps ten seconds it inspected the bandana then darted back to the petunias. It was about now that we got our second surprise: the bird didn't seem to fly in the ordinary sense. It catapulted away from us, or perhaps zipped would be a better word, or even hurtled. Trying to follow its flight, our heads jerked back and forth like a spectator's at a ping pong game.

You might say that the Calliope Hummingbird can perform any trick that a tuned-up helicopter is capable of except taking on passengers. Beating its wings at a blurring fifty-five strokes a second, it can hover to perfection horizontally or vertically. When the wing-beats are increased to seventy-five a second, it can attain a forward speed of about sixty miles an hour. Flying backward is a cinch.

Such Herculean efforts seem impossible when the bird's physique is examined. The hairlike legs are so spindly that it cannot walk on the ground and must be satisfied with perching. It weighs after a meal, about a tenth of an ounce.

Despite its seeming frailty the Calliope Hummingbird is as bold as brass. One summer at Sun Valley, Idaho, we saw one chase a big magpie the entire length of the outdoor skating rink. Even hawks have been routed.

Perhaps this partly explains how the Calliope manages to survive its yearly migration in the spring from south-western Mexico all the way to the high country of Arizona, California and Idaho, and north to the lower end of British Columbia and to northern Alberta. Purpose? Just to pick a spot a mile or so high and raise a family.

The bower is housekeeping on a Lilliputian scale. Skillfully built of silk-en plant fibers, cobwebs and such, then deliberately camouflaged with lichens, the nest so perfectly resembles a knot on a limb that people often pass close by unknowingly.

Courtship is a sketch. The male woos his lady by flying back and forth above her, executing snappy U-turns and buzzing like an imprisoned bee. His reward: two white eggs the size of peas.

Hummingbirds in general pose some unanswerable questions. Because they burn up so much energy flying, they must eat frequently - at Sun Valley the Calliope leaves the guard ropes for the flowers below every few minutes. How then can the Ruby-throat, a cousin of the Calliope found in the east, manage to fly some five hundred miles non-stop across the Gulf of Mexico? Yet it performs this astonishing feat twice a year.

And what of the hummingbirds that have been banded? In an effort to study their migrations, as is done with many birds, tiny aluminum bands were put on a leg of several hummers which then were freed. None was ever seen again.

(Continued on Page 50)

THE WESTERN Tanager

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

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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

As the month of May marks the
 close of our regularly scheduled activi-
 ties until a new season begins in Septem-
 ber, and as this issue of the Tanager
 will be the last also until then, it
 seems appropriate to cast a look back
 over our activities of this season now
 drawing to an end, as well as one forward
 in anticipation of next season's activi-
 ties.

There was a very gratifying in-
 crease of interest in our two regular
 monthly meetings this season. Credit for
 this is due our two able program chair-
 men, Mrs. Alvey and Mr. Small and their
 committees. They have done an excellent
 job of planning programs, and their en-
 thusiasm has been infectious. Our field
 trips also have had a good season, thanks
 to the efforts of our field trip chair-
 man. Next season we will resume these
 activities, and our program and field
 trip chairmen will be working harder than
 ever to make them even better and more
 interesting.

Many worthwhile improvements
 have been and are being made at Audubon
 House in Plummer Park under the direction
 of our very capable Headquarters Chair-
 man, Mrs. Russell Wilson. These improve-
 ments are designed to make our headquar-
 ters more useful and attractive to the
 public and to the numerous youth groups
 visiting there, as well as to members.
 Many members have donated their time and
 talents, and money, to this work, and
 this is greatly appreciated. The Head-
 quarters Committee, I know, also has am-
 bitious plans for next season.

It is not possible, in this
 limited space, to pay tribute individual-
 ly to each of the chairmen, committee mem-
 bers and others who contributed to the
 work of the Los Angeles Audubon Society
 this last season. They may rest assured,
 however, that their efforts are deeply
 appreciated.

With the advent of June, vaca-
 tion thoughts will be uppermost in the
 minds of many of us. I sincerely hope,
 however, that many will be planning to
 attend one or both of the annual events
 occurring then, which really mark the end
 of our season, our Annual Dinner on the
 18th of June, and the traditional outing
 at Charlton Flat on the 19th.

The former is now the occasion for installation of officers, and an excellent program is planned. Few members attend more than one or two of the several activities scheduled each month, but we hope that our Annual Dinner will be one occasion when all of these groups can get together at least once a year. We will be looking forward to seeing you there.

---Robert Edward Blackstone.

SLATE OF OFFICERS OF THE LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR 1958 - 1959

Proposed by the Nominating Committee: Mr. R. W. Julian, Chairman, Mr. R. Dudley Ross and Mrs. Maurice Alvey.

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WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Miss Helen R. Anderson,
 1711 So. Carmelina Ave., L.A. 25
 Mr. M. V. Ballou,
 820 Beacon Avenue, Los Angeles 17
 Miss Edith Bashor,
 2618 Butler Ave., Los Angeles 64
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 Dr. Milton Goldman,
 3970 Archdale Road, Encino, Calif.
 Mrs. H. B. Keeling,
 5272 Veronica St., Los Angeles 46.
 Mrs. Vivian I. Worman,
 605 Fernfield Drive, Monterey Park.

A new species of porpoise has been found in the Gulf of California, it was announced by Marineland scientists.

TINIEST THING IN FEATHERS - (Continued)

Today, no one, apparently, is trying the experiment with Calliopes. The smallest size standard leg band is too large. If the band were tailored to fit, there would be no room for a serial number or date. And no matter how tiny the band, it probably would be too heavy for the smallest bird in the country - the tiniest thing in feathers.

AUDUBON LIBRARY

Four books have been given to the library at Audubon House by Mr. Hiram Beebe:

Migration of Birds--Frederick Lincoln
 How to Attract Birds--Frank C. Pellett
 Hunting With the Camera--
 Allan Cruickshank
 North American Rock Plants--W. Preece

The Society is very grateful to Mr. Beebe for his interest as well as his gift.

The need for additional books for the library cannot be stressed too often. Members who may not have thought of supporting their Society in this way could do a great service by giving a book.

---Helen Sandmeyer.

Apricot growers in the Hemet-San Jacinto valley have been waging a battle with a most unusual foe - the Band-tailed pigeons. When the heavy spring snows in the San Jacinto mountains drove the game birds to lower elevations for food, the likeliest place was the nearby valley where several thousand acres of budding apricot trees gave promise of tasty morsels for them.

Their normal fare is acorns and pine nuts, so the tiny green fruit just forming in the blossoms looked tempting.

More than 10,000 birds were reported in the valley orchards during the height of the battle.

BIRDING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The exceptionally heavy rainfall of late winter promises nothing but good for the wildlife of Southern California. Travellers passing the Malibu fire area of last summer hardly notice the blackened stumps as they are cloaked in the greenery of the new shoots and everywhere the rich herbage and abundant wildflowers promise an abundant food supply for all forms of wildlife. The summer and fall crop of weed seeds promises to be very heavy. The great amount of greenery will supply food for tremendous numbers of insects and thus for birds.

While the severe winter weather did not produce much in the way of interesting winter water-birding, it promises much benefit for the transients and especially the summer residents. Loons became increasingly more numerous throughout late February and early March. A total albino Eared Grebe was at Upper Newport Bay March 22.

The Pelagic trip to Anacapa Island and waters beyond on March 23 was for the most part devoid of exceptional birds, however a fair representation of species was encountered although the numbers of individuals was very low. For example, only 1 Rhinoceros Auklet, 4 Xantus's Murrelets, 2 Cassin Auklets, 2 Pink-footed Shearwaters, 6 Sooty Shearwaters, and 1 Pomarine Jaeger were seen. An adult Bald Eagle was seen perched near the very crest of Anacapa Island. Most of the Pintail and other species of dabbling ducks had departed by the end of February, leaving small flocks of Shovellers, Green-winged Teal and Ruddy Ducks.

The migration of land birds was somewhat late, especially in the desert regions. Large numbers of Robins continued to spend the late winter in the lowlands and a small flight of Lewis Woodpeckers was noted. A fair flight of Varied Thrushes occurred as numerous observers reported small flocks here and there. The male Vermillion Flycatcher near Morongo Inn in Morongo Valley was there throughout the winter. There were numerous reports of wintering Orioles and Tanagers but very few of the less common land birds were reported.

---Arnold Small, VE 7-2272

The following article appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Sunday, March 23. We are tremendously proud to have our beloved Alma Stultz accorded this honor:

"Perhaps the last of the vast heritage of plants bequeathed by Luther Burbank is one introduced this year. The azalea-flowered nectarine, lost for several decades, has been rediscovered by Theodore Payne. It is fitting that this 86 year old pioneer California plantsman should crown his life time of plant introductions with one obtained indirectly from the great Burbank.

The history of the azalea-flowered nectarine dates back to 1904, when an agricultural writer, visiting Burbank, was given a seedling nectarine with beautiful flowers, discarded because the fruit was worthless. Joseph A. Johnson planted it at his home on Sunset Blvd. (L.A.), where it grew and blossomed for many years. A few years ago it was brought to the attention of Mr. Payne, who describes it as "the most beautiful flowering tree I have ever seen." Propagated plants have blooms 2 to 2-1/2 inches across of rosy white shading to deep pink, with a wavy margin much like azaleas. In fact the plant in bloom resembles a tree full of azaleas.

The cultivar has been named ALMA STULTZ in honor of the Director of the Audubon Center, daughter of Joseph Johnson, who planted the original tree given him by Luther Burbank more than 50 years ago. Plants are available now at local nurseries in 3 to 5 foot sizes in bare-root condition but available after April in containers."

AUDUBON HOUSE

Audubon House now has a fine sales counter with ample top display surface and three shelves of storage space below, thanks to the labor donated by one of our members - Mr. McCune.

Do stop in and see the change being made possible by the help of our members.

---Marian Wilson, Curator.

-CONSERVATION NOTES

For years the federal government has through one agency been subsidizing the drainage of wetlands, particularly in the states of Minnesota and the Dakotas, while at the same time through another agency, seeking to acquire wetlands for waterfowl refuges. It is said, even, that conservation reserve payments are now being made to restore marshlands previously drained with federal assistance. A bill introduced by Rep. Henry S. Reuss, of Wisconsin, H. R. 10641, would end federal cost sharing and technical assistance in farm drainage harmful to wildlife, and create corresponding incentives in the conservation reserve program for maintaining wetlands.

The Engle Military Lands Withdrawal Bill was signed into law by Pres. Eisenhower early this year. This legislation, you will recall, in addition to placing Congressional curbs on military land withdrawals from the public domain, will require observance of state fish and game laws on all military reservations.

Proponents of the controversial Bruce Eddy project once again succeeded in having it included in the huge Omnibus Rivers and Harbors Bill. Contrary to expectations, however, the president vetoed this bill, so this threat to wildlife is averted for the time being.

Checkerboard private ownership of parcels of land within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park has hindered its administration and development. Part of this land was acquired recently when the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, over the protests of the San Diego Cattlemen's Association and the Tax Collector, voted to sell 7357 acres of tax-delinquent land to the State. The land could have been sold to private buyers for almost three times the amount offered by the Division of Beaches and Parks, so the supervisors are to be warmly commended for their action.

You are all familiar with the WILDERNESS BILL, S. 1176, and companion measures in the House. To conservationists, this is without doubt one of the most important bills ever to come before Congress. It would be tragic if this legislation were to fail through lack of

support. If you have not yet written your congressman and senators to support the WILDERNESS BILL, by all means do so without delay.

SHEEP WAR

According to a news item in the Los Angeles Times, residents of the Hinkley Valley near Barstow are fighting desperately against invasion of their area by huge flocks of grazing sheep. The sheep are brought in by the truckload for the season and are expected to reach 40,000 head.

Hinkley and Barstow Chamber of Commerce officials are protesting the grazing which, they point out, destroys the wildflowers and natural ground cover, causing erosion and dust storm conditions. They are also concerned lest the sheep grazing rob the native animals of forage.

Although all grazing permits were cancelled in January 1956, with one year of grace allowed, the grazing still continues, since the law does not specifically prohibit grazing without permit. The Hinkley people are carrying their protests to the Bureau of Land Management. They are also seeking amendment of the Taylor Grazing act to prohibit issuance of grazing permits for areas where the annual rainfall is less than seven inches.

In the April issue of Trail-R-News, a magazine read by many travel trailerists, Mr. Jack Kneass, editor, pays a fine tribute to our Audubon Magazine. Mr. Kneass is an ardent conservationist. Trail-R-News became a member of the National Audubon Society and the Los Angeles Branch last fall and holds memberships in many conservation organizations. Its subscribers are interested in travel and the out-of-doors, fishing, hunting and birding.

To eliminate the problem of bird seed sprouting in the lawn, place seed on large cookie sheets and place in oven at 200° for one hour. This will prevent germination but will not impair food value. Especially fine for sunflower seeds which Scrub Jays love to plant.

MARCH FIELD TRIP TO ARBORETUM

Although the weather was threatening, fourteen people boarded the bus to the Arboretum. The gray day made it difficult to distinguish colors of birds but was fine for walking and observing their movements and songs. Twenty-four species were reported, most of them by Mr. Quattlebaum who was there early when the sun was out. He reported House Finches, Lesser Goldfinches, Calif. Purple Finch, Song Sparrow, Gambel's Sparrow, Eng. Sparrow, Audubon's Warbler, Bush-tit, Hermit Thrush, Robin, Brewer's Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Mockingbird, Crow, Scrub Jay, Chinese Spotted Dove, Bandtail Pigeon, Nuttall Woodpecker, Red-shafted Flicker, Sparrow Hawk, Ruddy Duck and Coots.

The ride around the grounds was exceptionally enjoyable and instructive as the driver was well versed in the history, purposes and background of all the plantings. Many changes have been made in the park and more are in progress. The plantings are arranged mostly by Mediterranean countries.

Some very showy shrubs and trees from South Africa, such as the Ver-gilia, which should do well here, are thriving. They were started from seed.

Among the later improvements are two orchid houses, several glass houses and other scientific equipment for gathering weather data and for studying the effect of smog on vegetation as well as for growing plants from all over the world.

Many experimental plantings of shrubs, grass, and other ground covers are being made and herb gardens are growing and being planted. The plan is to have a kitchen herb, a medicinal herb and an economic garden, with plant specialists who can be consulted by anyone.

An imitation So. American jungle near the lake is progressing. It is for the growing of plants which would be found in such places.

Our guide pointed out all the trees, shrubs and flowers and told the history of each and the interesting legends connected with many of them. There are the lotus, the silk oaks, the Montezuma cypress, thought to be one of the oldest species of tree now on earth, papyrus from

Egypt, cedars of Lebanon, Christ's crown of thorns, various figs, palms, bamboo, eucalypti and acacias. The sycamore fig, which Zaceus climbed in order to see the Lord, is represented by a fine specimen.

The rain held off until we were in the bus ready to start for home and we all voted it an interesting and rewarding trip.

---Effie Mahaffie.

PACIFIC COAST BIENNIAL CONVENTION

If you are planning to attend in March 1959, better not wait another day to send in your reservations and ask to be placed on the priority list to receive the OFFICIAL registration blank that will be mailed late in the Fall. NO MONEY AT THIS TIME.

The dates: March 21 - 22 - 23 - 24, 1959

The place: ASTILOMAR, Pacific Grove, Cal.

The Theme: OUTDOOR INTRODUCTIONS

Banquet Speaker: ROGER TORY PETERSON

Opening dates for the five two-week sessions of AUDUBON CAMP of CALIFORNIA in 1958 will be June 22, July 6, July 20, August 3 and August 17. Register now for the session of your choice.

This summer make it a point to visit Audubon House in Plummer Park and get acquainted with the many interesting exhibits there, select some books from the library for leisurely reading and meet the nice people who give so generously of their time so that we may enjoy all the benefits of our headquarters.

This is the last issue of the Tanager until fall. The editor wishes to thank all those who have contributed articles and otherwise helped with the task of publication.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY
OFFICERS.....1957-1958

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Historian.Mrs. Olive Alvey
Registrar of Members.Miss Iola R. Moore, 278 Bronwood Avenue, L.A. 49

CALENDAR FOR MAY - JUNE, 1958

- May 8, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 912 Victoria Avenue.
- May 10, SATURDAY FIELD TRIP to Tapia Park. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Drive up Coast Highway past Manibu Lagoon, turn to right and follow Malibu Canyon Road to Tapia Park. Bring lunch, bird feed and binoculars. Birding at Malibu Lagoon on return.
---Ethel Craig, Leader.
- May 15, THURSDAY FIELD TRIP to Tucker Hummingbird Sanctuary in Modjeska Canyon and Irvine Park. Expect to be at Sanctuary at 9:15 a.m. to watch morning feeding of the birds. At 11:30 a.m. go to Irvine Park for lunch and birding. Our Tanner Bus will leave Los Angeles from Grand Ave. entrance of the Biltmore Hotel between 5th and 6th Sts. at 8:15 a.m. sharp. Round trip fare \$2.50. Please have exact fare. Bring lunch and binoculars. We will travel Santa Ana Freeway to Orange, east on Chapman Ave. to Santiago Road. Right 8 miles to Silverado Canyon fork, right 5 miles to Modjeska Canyon. Make reservations one week in advance with Miss Edna Burt - PL 5-1044. Leave for return to Los Angeles at 2:00 p.m.
- May 21, WEDNESDAY EVENING MEETING at Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. 8:00 p.m. Dr. James E. Crouch of San Diego State College will present his colored motion picture "Wildlife of the Sierra Nevada." Professor Crouch was Ornithologist at Audubon Camp of California for the past three years and teaches Ornithology at San Diego State College.
---Arnold Small, Chairman
- May 22, THURSDAY MORNING MEETING - 10:00 a.m. in Long Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. Mr. Paul Lindau and Miss Virginia Lindau, his daughter, both Audubon Society members, will give a program entitled, "Bugs, Birds and Flowers." Mr. Lindau is a retired chemist and Scout Master. There will be moving pictures as well as beautiful slides made by these two ardent and accomplished photographers; many of their nature studies have been seen in the Disney pictures.
---Olive Alvey, Chairman
- May 25, SUNDAY FIELD TRIP will be to Mount Pinos for mountain birding and Condors. Group will meet at Frazier Park off Route #99 on the Mount Pinos Road at 9:00 a.m.
Leader, Jim Huffman, FRontier 2-7124
-
- June 12, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. at 912 Victoria Avenue.
- June 18, ANNUAL DINNER AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS - see enclosed notice.
- June 19, TRADITIONAL OUTING AT CHARLTON FLATS. For information and reservations, call Miss Edna Burt, PL 5-1044.

Announcing

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 1958 6 P.M.

Reservations
not later
than
June 4th



TO: MISS ESTHER JOHNSON
1250¹/₂ Holt Avenue, Los Angeles 35

Please make _____ reservations for me

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SEND IT NOW!