

## Western



## Tanager

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE  
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Number 1

A MEXICAN ADVENTURE

By J. W. Huffman

There did not seem to be any doubt about where we ought to go. First, Bill Anderson of the California Department of Fish and Game told us of his birding experience in the rain forest of Veracruz, Mexico, and then Dr. Malcolm Gordon of the University of California at Los Angeles told us a story of his fish collecting and birding in this same place. Later, we indirectly obtained a recommendation from Don Eckelberry. But now I am getting ahead of my story.

My son, Jimmy, and I decided that on our first birding trip to the Mexican east coast we would try to get as far south as possible, in order to increase our chances of seeing a greater number of the more "exotic" species. On the recommendation of our good friends, Bill and Mac, our goal was the rain forests bordering Lake Catemaco in southern Veracruz. The idea of exploring a rain forest appealed to us. Contrary to what one might think, a virgin rain forest is not easily found in Mexico. Almost wherever there are roads, the land has been cleared for the pineapple fields, the coffee plantations, and banana groves. Lake Catemaco, very near the Gulf of Mexico, promised to be sufficiently remote, however.

Our plan which, with some minor hitches, we did carry out, was to fly to Mexico City, rent a car, and drive to Veracruz, birding along the way. Foolishly, we believed what the Los Angeles Hertz and Avis agencies told us about the plentiful supply of rental cars in Mexico, even during the holiday season, and here our plans faltered. Arriving in Mexico City early Christmas morning on Pan American, we immediately contacted the U.S. car rental agencies. We were shocked to find we could have a Ford or Chevy on January 2, no sooner. Lake Catemaco seemed very far away. A Mexican rental agency around the corner from our hotel also had no cars at that time. However, they did hold out some hope. Cars would be returned, and eventually!! we would get one. Operating on the theory that the squeaky wheel is the one that will get attention, we hung around the Mexican agency, took the boys out for coffee, and tried out our Spanish on them, praised their English, and impressed them with our dire need. These tactics paid off, and late on the 26th we got our "car", a Fiat.

Even if space permitted, I could not adequately describe the experience of driving in Mexico City. The agent brought the Fiat to our hotel in the center of Mexico City's business district and briefed me on its operation. There is not much in driving a Ford with a fully automatic gear shift that prepares one for coping with a four-forward-speed, non-standard (from an American point of view) gear shift. I protested that I was not ready for the crowded Mexico City "avenidas." The agent reassured me, "Why worry, Señor, you are fully covered with insurance." So I buzzed off. Seemingly, the only traffic regulation in Mexico City is "Watch Out." Hand

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### THE WESTERN Tanager

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 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings  
 Editor.....Hubert H. Weiser  
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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 - \$6.50, Husband & Wife - \$10.,  
 Sustaining - \$12.50, Sustaining-Husband  
 & Wife - \$20., Active - \$25., Supporting  
 \$50., Contributing - \$100., Life - \$300.

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Headquarters, Library and Nature Museum  
 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles 46  
 HO 7-9495. Hours: 2-4 p.m. Monday, Wed-  
 nesday, Thursday and Saturday. Groups  
 by appointment. Open for members and  
 guests before and after each meeting.

#### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

At times we are wont to think of the  
 Audubon Society primarily as a means of  
 indulging in our hobby of the study of  
 nature and a medium through which we can  
 contact others with the same interest, in  
 short, a source of enjoyment. Now these  
 are not unworthy motives. I find that  
 they have moved me to a large extent in  
 becoming an active member.

Behind the scenes in your Los Angel-  
 es Society, however, are activities de-  
 voted more directly to the Society's aims  
 of the study and protection of wildlife  
 and natural resources. I am referring to  
 such activities as our programs of in-  
 struction to young people and their lead-  
 ers, the maintenance of a library and  
 museum for educational purposes, and co-  
 operation with government agencies and  
 other organizations interested in the  
 preservation of wildlife and wildland.  
 Continuation of these types of activities  
 is essential if we and our children are  
 to be able to continue the enjoyment of  
 the outdoors that we prize so highly.

I come now to the point of my dis-  
 cussion. The carrying on of these acti-  
 vities in an effective manner requires  
 the work of many people and it requires  
 funds. We are fortunate to be able to  
 find so many people, some of them busy  
 outside the Society, who will dedicate  
 themselves to this work. However, with-  
 out sufficient funds, they cannot do the  
 kind of job they would like to do.

The growth of Societies such as yours  
 is dependent to a large extent on bequests  
 of money or convertible assets by members  
 and others. Membership dues, our princi-  
 pal source of regular income, are little  
 more than sufficient to support the rou-  
 tine functions such as the publication of  
 the Western Tanager. For those who can-  
 not personally participate in the Socie-  
 ty's activities (and I do not overlook  
 the fact that there are many who might,  
 if asked to) the giving of donations of-  
 fers a means of actively contributing.  
 Remember that such donations are deduct-  
 ible from your taxable income. So when  
 the time comes to consider contributions,  
 remember your Los Angeles Audubon Society.

James W. Huffman

signals are rare. Indeed, there is little time for them. Turning left across traffic from a right hand lane or making the opposite maneuver are S.O.P. Every few blocks is a Glorietta, a traffic circle, where a multitude of streets come together at a large statue or something. Around this you madly dash, looking for the continuation of the street you came in on and trying to get out of the swirling traffic when you find it. It is very educational.

With due respect to the economy of the small car, I cannot recommend it as being safe for touring on the Mexican highways. You need plenty of power to keep clear of trucks, especially on mountain roads. We found on steep grades that trailer trucks would overtake and pass the Fiat with its small power plant, sometimes on dangerous curves where, as is typical of Mexican roads, there is no shoulder on which you can pull over for safety.

Our route out of Mexico City toward southern Veracruz some 400 miles away was Highway 190, up around the shoulder of snow-covered Ixtaccihuatl. The highway summits at 10,486 feet a few miles before reaching the town of Rio Frio, about thirty miles from the Capitol. Here bordering a level stretch of road called Llano Grande, are grassy fields surrounded by dense evergreen forests. Many of the birds here are found also in the western mountains of the U.S., for example, the Mexican Junco, Olive Warbler, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Pine Siskin. Some typical Mexican species we saw here were Slate-Throated Redstart and Red Warbler.

Our first stop out of Mexico City was Puebla, on December 27. We can recommend the Lastra Hotel in Puebla. The food is excellent, and from the hotel there is a magnificent morning view of the sun shining on snow-covered Popocatepetl (17,841 feet) and Iztaccihuatl (16,967 feet). The landscape and the birds on the high plateau around Mexico City remind one of California. However, as you drop down from the highlands toward the costal lowlands the landscape and the birds grow more tropical. Leaving Puebla on Dec. 28 we reached the edge of the plateau via Highways 150 and 75, just before reaching Orizaba approximately 200 miles from Mexico City.

Here we descended precipitously some 4000 feet in a few miles. Our goal that day was Fortin de Las Flores, a famed show spot in eastern Mexico, and situated on the edge of Metlac Canyon, one of the few heavily wooded areas in the region. Metlac Canyon was also highly recommended for birding by Bill Anderson.

My spirits at this time were at a low ebb. Although the Mexican winter is the dry season, we were experiencing a "Norther." The sky was partly overcast and sunshine alternated with drizzle. We had not seen many typical Mexican birds. Furthermore, we had no confidence in our little car. We could imagine ourselves stranded far from help in the rain forest with some sort of motor trouble. Our luck was soon to turn spectacularly for the better, however.

(To be continued)

The Sunday field trip on May 23,24 was an overnight camping trip to Greenhorn Mountain Park in Kern County.

This was the first Audubon trip to this area, and all attending agreed that the exceptional scenery, facilities and birding justified regular visits. About 12 persons met at Bakersfield on Saturday morning the 23rd and caravanned to Greenhorn Mountain. After spending Saturday night at Tiger Flat Campground, the party returned to Los Angeles via Lake Isabella and the Kern River Canyon. Some of the birds seen during the trip were Rough-legged Hawk, Calliope Hummingbird (on its nest), Williamson's Sapsucker, Clark's Nutcracker, Dipper (Kern River Canyon), Townsend's Solitaire, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Phainopepla, Solitary Vireo, Hermit Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, Cassin's Finch, Red-Crossbill, Green-Tailed Towhee, Chipping Sparrow and Fox Sparrow.

Jim Huffman

Do not forget the wonderful Screen Tours. Outstanding nature films on central California, coral reefs of the Caribbean, Alaska wilderness.

(See page 6)

## AUDUBON HOUSE

Many calls are received at Audubon House. Some calls are from people requesting information about the National Audubon Society - what it stands for and what it does, the activities of the Los Angeles Branch, Audubon Junior Clubs, appointments for youth groups to visit the Museum and how to treat baby, sick or injured birds. We have had literature to send in answer to all questions except the last one. This year we have found three members who are more than willing to help persons with these problems. Mrs. Muriel France of Encino does wonderful things for birds in all three categories mentioned above. She will call for birds, within a reasonable distance, care for them and release them when they are able to care for themselves. She has written an article entitled "First Aid for Feathered Orphans," which has been mimeographed by a grateful questioner, and is available from Headquarters on request. Mr. Kurt Schliephake, Paradise Pet Hospital on Sunset Blvd., will give helpful information and will take injured wild birds to care for. He has released several in El Monte and Elysian Park. Bruce Simon, 18, our youngest member offering to take and care for injured birds, lives in North Hollywood and is studying veterinary medicine at Valley State College. He has treated, with the help of Dr. A. W. Clark, a veterinarian of North Hollywood, over 25 birds in the last three years. His patients include a Raven, which he has taken on field trips, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Horned Owl and a Golden Eagle as well as smaller birds. He releases these at El Monte and Griffith Park. Anyone wishing to reach these members may call Headquarters, HO 7-9495, or PO 1-7635. If there are other members interested in taking birds for care and treatment we will be glad to have your name and telephone for our information file at Headquarters.

Mrs. Mary V. Hood, our new Curator was named Recreation Naturalist of the Month for July, Park Recreation Month throughout Los Angeles County, in recognition of her fine work in recreation and

nature study and training. She will have charge of our enlarged Museum and has many fine plans. We will have the use of the entire Plummer House which will give us three rooms for the Museum instead of the present two. We will have room for more books in our library and a much more convenient area for our sales department. All these improvements will make it easier for our Youth Leadership Training Chairman and Youth Instruction Chairman to handle the groups needing our help. These Chairmen will also need more workers. All volunteers will be most welcome.

We are still hoping for a typewriter for Headquarters and need one for the Western Tanager typist. These must be in good working condition and have elite type. There must be among our more than seven hundred members some who are unable to give time but may be able to give items needed or to give funds with which we may purchase them as needed.

We hope to see many of you at Audubon House this year and urge you to use your Library. All good books on nature subjects which members have enjoyed and wish to donate will be welcomed by our Librarian.

Mrs. Russell E. Wilson

## THE PICNIC

By Hugh Weiser

The July 25th Picnic at Charlton Flats was well attended. Over forty birders arrived for potluck supper amid the Ponderosas and Incense Cedars where good food was surely in quantity.

There were many Western Bluebirds about the picnic grounds while Steller's Jays came out in force. Newer members were happy to "get" White-headed Woodpeckers and even the experienced birders perked up over the aerial display of Purple Martins directly overhead. This is the first time most old-timers had seen them in California. The big Swallows were reported in 1953 by Pyle as occurring in the San Bernadinos but they had never been officially reported in the San Gabriel Mountains.

After a brief and very informal board meeting, many birders took off on a short owl expedition. Though only two Great-Horned Owls seemed to be in voice everyone felt repaid by being in pure, cool air with a brilliant star canopy overhead.

This is the first time Audubon Society had scheduled such a summer activity. It was such a success that it most probably will be repeated next summer.

#### APRIL FIELD TRIP

On Saturday, April 25 some 30 members and guests of the Society assembled near Whitewater in the San Geronio Pass. We caravanned to Paul Wilhelm's 1000 Palms Oasis for a morning of excellent birding which yielded such species as Gray Flycatchers (6), Warblers, Tanagers, Grosbeaks, Thrushes, Vaux Swifts, and typical desert birds. The oasis was fairly alive with migrants and the best find of the day (made by Russ and Marion Wilson) was a Northern Waterthrush. Lunchtime found us at the popular Cottonwood Springs Oasis in Joshua Tree National Monument but since we were sharing this place with too many other people we left via Box Canyon (where the Desert Smoke trees were bursting with blooms) for Mecca. Migrants including numerous Hummingbirds and Warblers abounded in Box Canyon. Late in the day we stopped at the north end of the Salton Sea to look at Yellow-headed Blackbirds and shorebirds. Those who arrived at Ramer Lake, Imperial State Waterfowl Management area near Calipatria before dark were treated to a fine flight of White-faced Ibis. The group camped at Finney Lake and before dawn on Sunday assembled for the dawn chorus at Ramer Lake. Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Black Terns, Black Gallinules, Ducks, Fulvous Tree-Ducks, Black-necked Stilts, and Rails made birding here very worthwhile. Those who followed on to the south end of the Salton Sea were treated to Gull-billed Terns and White Pelicans.

--Arnold Small

#### BIRDING IN SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

By William G. Lehmann

Sequoia National Park offers the resident of Southern California the most easily accessible and one of the most beautiful areas for the observation of the birds of the Transition and Boreal Life Zones of the Sierra Nevada. With this in mind, during the second week in July, my family and I camped at Lodgepole Camp in Tokopah Valley on the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River. The valley itself is in the Transition Zone and there were abundant birds characteristic of this zone. From here we found it a not very difficult climb to Heather Lake (my wife and children accompanied me), passing through the Canadian and Hudsonian Life Zones to the Arctic-Alpine Zone at Heather Lake.

As in any other birding trip, there are, looking back on it, certain birds which stand out in my mind. Ever since, as a boy, I saw Arthur A. Allen's first sound pictures of Dippers, these birds have been to me a symbol of the cool, clear water and fresh air of the mountains. Two or three pairs of Dippers were present in Tokopah Valley and were easily accessible for observation. One pair fed so close to me that I couldn't adjust my binoculars close enough! On this trip I saw my first Goshawks. One of these I was able to observe quite closely as it followed me through the forest going from one Red Fir to another scolding loudly all the while. (Another first for me was a pair of Pine Siskins - within a few feet of my camp!) The most memorable experience of the whole trip, however, was the heavenly music of the Hermit Thrushes singing in the Red Fir forest. There is nothing like the beautiful flute-like tones of these birds sounding and resounding throughout the forest.

It was a wonderful week. There is nothing better for body and soul! Next year we plan to do it again. Only this time we hope to pack into the "High Country."

CONSERVATION  
By Otis Wade

Preservation and development of portions of the peninsula of Point Reyes in Marin County for public recreational use have been proposed by the National Park Service. The proposal to create a national seashore park has been given a boost by Senator Engle and Representative Miller who have introduced identical bills authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to establish the "Point Reyes National Seashore" in order to "save and preserve for the inspiration, benefit and use of the people of the United States certain unspoiled shoreline areas- etc. etc." The area is one of five, and the only one in California, which the Interior Department's advisory board on national parks has suggested for national status.

Subdivision and commercial development of this area which includes Drakes Cove, appears inevitable and certainly it should be balanced with the proposed public development.

This National Park Service proposal to create a new type of national park - a national seashore- has also been suggested for the Cape Cod Peninsula in Massachusetts. Of great significance is this Park Service recommendation that we take positive steps to preserve our vanishing shoreline. It has yet to be accepted by the Department of the Interior, but a "breakthrough" has been accomplished.

We are in receipt of a form letter from the State of California Fish and Game Commission in response to our protesting the slaughter of the Tule Elk which advises, in summation, that there is to be no elk hunting season on either the Roosevelt Elk in Humboldt County or the Tule Elk in Inyo County this year.

The Department of the Interior has authorized some \$280,000 to be expended on pesticide research. However, Senator Magnuson of Washington and Congressman Lee Metcalf of Montana have introduced bills to raise this sum to

\$2,565,000. Research appears to be badly needed to determine the effects of pesticides on fish and wildlife resources. It has been an emotional subject with many raging pros and cons; and many statements have been made unsupported by facts. The effect of some of these poisons on wildlife - and human beings - needs to be clearly known. One item that is very clearly known is that the wholesale value of these poisons to the chemical companies has risen from about \$40 million in 1940 to something close to \$290 million in 1956!

The Wilderness Bill: - two current bills (Senate 1123 and House 1960) will make wilderness protection and preservation part of our general public policy. They are now before the Congress. Letters to your local representatives in both houses of Congress will help assure passage of these companion bills in the present session.

SCREEN TOURS 1959-1960 SEASON  
(Full information will be mailed shortly)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLES - Emerson Scott  
Tuesday, October 20

THE SHANDON HILLS - Eben McMillan  
Saturday, October 24

THE NEW WORLD REDISCOVERED -  
Laurel Reynolds  
Tues. Nov. 17; Sat. Nov. 21

HIGH HORIZONS - Wm. Ferguson  
Tuesday, Jan. 5; Saturday, Jan. 9.

THE SHANDON HILLS - John Taft  
Tuesday, February 23.

LAND OF EARLY AUTUMN -  
Cleveland P. Grant  
Saturday, February 6

SECRETS OF THE SEA - G. Clifford Carl  
Tuesday, March 15

PUERTO RICO, U.S.A. - Fran Wm. Hall  
Saturday, March 19

LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

President: Mr. James W. Huffman 2912 MANHATTAN AVE., MANHATTAN BEACH  
Registrar of Members: Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer 355 ELM ST., BURBANK

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER, 1959

- Sept. 8 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING - 8:00 P. M. in Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. In response to many requests we are for the first time holding an Evening Meeting in September. This is to be an informal, get-acquainted type of meeting. Those who come are invited to share with us any interesting vacation experiences they may have had, especially any having to do with birds or other wildlife. If you have any color slides, photographs or specimens, be sure to bring them along. MR. HERB CLARKE and MR. ARNOLD SMALL will show color slides and relate their experiences on vacation trips in search of birds in the Rocky Mountains, the prairie states and in Arizona. Light Refreshments will be served.  
Chairman - Robert Blackstone
- Sept. 10 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
- Sept. 24 THURSDAY MORNING MEETING - 10 to 12 o'clock, Plummer Park, Long Hall. NEW MEMBERS, THIS IS FOR YOU. This meeting has been planned so that you may become acquainted with members of the Society and with its many activities. Summer experiences will be a feature of the day, programs for the coming year discussed briefly, and field trips outlined. Mr. George Hastings, author of "Trees of Santa Monica", teacher and naturalist, will conduct a walk through the park, identifying the trees there. Audubon House, containing a lending library and a nature museum, will be open to visitors, Mrs. Marion Wilson, hostess. COME AND BRING A SANDWICH. COFFEE AND CAKE WILL BE SERVED.  
Program Chairman - Olive Alvey
- Sept. 26-27 SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP  
Place - Yuma, Arizona (including West Pond, Imperial Dam, Mittry Lake, Martinez Lake). Also south end of the Salton Sea on the return trip.  
Meeting Place - We will meet at the campground at Imperial Dam, California. To reach it, take the road from Winterhaven, Calif. (just before you cross the Colorado River bridge to Yuma). The campground is on the California side of the Imperial Dam.  
Time: 7:00 A.M., Saturday, September 26.  
Specialties - We should find Wood Ibis, Rails, Least Bitterns, Harris Hawks, Gilded Flickers, White-fronted Doves, and numerous migrants. If the Brown Booby is still at Martinez Lake (and it is there at this writing), we will go to see it.  
Accommodations - It is suggested that you drive down on Friday night. Good motels available in Yuma and a good campground at Imperial Dam. We will spend Saturday night in this vicinity and be in the marshes at dawn on Sunday. Bring food.
- RESERVE THE DATE - SUNDAY, October 11, 2 to 4 o'clock. ANNUAL TEA PARTY AT THE HOME OF MR. & MRS. EDWARD TERRY, 2586 Aberdeen Avenue.