

T H E

Western Tanager



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

THE LOS ANGELES BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume 27

September, 1960

Number 1

ALLEN HUMMINGBIRDS NESTING AND REARING OF YOUNG By Dorothy F. Lilly

A hummingbird of any species, because of its smallness and quickness, plus the difficulty of banding such a delicate but independent creature, lives out most of its life in secrecy. Allen hummers with their limited breeding range of north and central coastal California and their custom of migrating far to the south for the winter, are even less known than resident species. I was fortunate in having a female Allen nest in my small city garden for three seasons in a row. I kept careful notes of her activities.

In a report of my observations, co-authored by Dr. Robert T. Orr, Curator of Birds and Mammals at the California Academy of Science, San Francisco, and published in the May-June, 1959 issue of Pacific Discovery, many of my day-to-day recordings had to be deleted. Herein I have included the ones I believe will most interest Western Tanager readers.

On April 6, 1955 I made my first observation. A female Allen was constructing a nest ten feet from the ground in a Boston ivy vine above a southeast window of my home, a single-story, sandstone-tinted stucco house in San Carlos, California, 25 miles down the Peninsula from San Francisco. I could not see where she went to get the white plant floss that made the little cup but did note that many of her trips were to a nearby Cryptomeria (Japanese redwood) tree, apparently after the cobwebs which were plentifully spread between its stiff branchlets. One day she brought inconspicuous gray grass for the outside finish and last of all hung curly flakes of pale green lichen on the exposed surface.

Two eggs were laid on consecutive days and she began incubating in earnest on April 13 but still left the nest every ten or fifteen minutes. I thought, "What an impatient little mother!" Then, I discovered that a pair of very young Allen hummers were perched on a small Guava tree about six feet east of her nest. A mother bird fed them and disappeared. Could it be that we had a colony of Allens in our front yard? I watched very closely from every possible angle and soon determined that it was the same female feeding the young that was incubating eggs in the nest I had been observing.

About every fifteen minutes she would make a sudden blurry exit from the nest, sweep past the two young and streak off after food; then, as suddenly, return and feed first one and then the other by her rather violent method of regurgitation. She averaged no more than five minutes from the time she left the nest until she was back in it and calmly warming her eggs for the next ten minutes. Each day from dawn till dusk the routine continued. How long would a creature only $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long be able to keep up such a pace and what did she feed them that could be

THE WESTERN Tanager

collected so fast?

Free to members...Others \$1.50 annually
 Editor Emeritus.....George T. Hastings
 Editor.....Hubert H. Weiser
 3749 Shannon Road, L.A. 27....NO 4-2753

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 - \$25.00, Support-
 ing \$50..Contributing - \$100.,Life \$300.

OFFICERS - 1960-1961

President Emeritus:..Mrs. Mary B. Salmon
 Jr. Past President..Mr. Robert Blackstone
 President.....Mr. James W. Huffman
 1st Vice-President.....Mr. Arnold Small
 2nd Vice-President....Mrs. Maurice Alvey
 Exec. Sec'y.....Mrs. Russell E. Wilson
 Treasurer.....Mr. Donald L. Adams
 Record. Sec'y.....Mrs. Earl Mahaffie
 Registrar.....Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer
 Curator.....Mrs. Mary V. Hood

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Conservation.....Mr. Frank Little
 Finance & Ed. Fund...Mr. F. Walton Brown
 Headquarters.....Mrs. Russell E. Wilson
 Youth Instructn...Mrs. Catherine Freeman
 Leadership Training...Mrs. Mary V. Hood
 Program, Evening...Mr. Robert Blackstone
 Program, Morning.....Mrs. Maurice Alvey
 Field Trips.....Mr. David V. Robison
 Publicity.....Mrs. Mary Larson
 Public Relations.....Mr. Arnold Larson
 Sanctuaries.....Mr. Frank Little
 Screen Tours.....Mrs. Donald L. Adams
 Sales.....Miss Esther Johnson
 Western Tanager.....Mr. Hubert H. Weiser
 Librarian.....Mrs. Gerald Lane

AUDUBON HOUSE

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.

To the westward, several ironbark
 eucalyptus had early blossoms on some
 of their boughs. She flew in their di-
 rection most often although she might
 return by a different route. She would
 glide up and down and over the surfaces
 of trees, shrubs and fences supposedly
 collecting young spiders or tiny insect
 life such as gnats, caught in spider's
 webs. Whatever it was, it was good stuff.
 The young hummers looked full and con-
 tented while she licked her bill clean
 and returned to the nest.

They perched in the warm sunshine,
 blissfully youthful and relaxed. If a
 large white cumulus cloud floated over-
 head, their eyes followed it. They might
 suddenly have an impulse to race to the
 hedge, winner choosing the best perch,
 both remembering how SHE preferred that
 they be back in the Guava tree in time
 for lunch. Or it may be that she called
 to them for they usually returned before
 she started after food again. A watcher
 had the impression that the mother bird
 checked as she departed and firmly ad-
 monished her children, "Don't move till
 I return." They never did.

I had a very good chance to study
 their colors and markings for this Guava
 was directly adjacent to a window. Un-
 less I touched the glass I could not be
 seen through it. When first out of the
 nest the body of a young Allen is nearly
 as long as that of the adult bird but
 its bill is only about half its eventual
 length. The back is not a distinct
 green like either of its parents' but is a
 rich reddish bronze. Its throat soon
 becomes speckled light brown but for
 the first few days appears streaked with
 fine lines raying from chin to sides of
 neck. The underparts are a buff while
 wings and tail appear dark brown, in
 some lights almost purple. Its head
 feathers are similar to the back. It
 is a plump little "squab" with a baby
 look quite distinguishable from its
 sleek sophisticated mother's.
 (To be continued next month.)

CONSERVATION NOTES

Good news! The first, in what is to be a whole series, of wildflower sanctuaries was dedicated in Antelope Valley this spring. The County of Los Angeles, in a public ceremony on April 30, 1960, set aside half a section (320 acres) of desert land as a wildflower preserve.

County Supervisor Warren Dorn made the actual presentation, although speeches were made by many notables. One of these was former Supervisor John Anson Ford, who made the original resolution to create the sanctuary. Also present was Theodore Payne, a man who has devoted a lifetime to the preservation of native plants. Moved to the verge of tears, Mr. Payne said this action was a climax to his life work. Los Angeles Audubon is very proud to have Theodore Payne - a great conservationist - as a member. An appreciation luncheon, sponsored by the Southern California Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, was held immediately following the ceremonies.

The good news, however, comes not so much from the dedication of this, called the Butte Valley Wildflower Sanctuary, as from the precedent set. This is the first such county action, we are told, in the country; we certainly hope more counties will follow suit. Los Angeles County already has the machinery going to give us several more in the coming year. Then too, a wildflower sanctuary is really a wildlife preserve, a small biotic community in which all living things can exist naturally.

Anyone caring to visit the sanctuary will find the directions simple: Take U.S. Highway 6 to Lancaster, turn right (east) on Avenue J for $19\frac{1}{2}$ miles, then left (north) for one mile - address: 19500 East Avenue I.

Frank Little

A REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

During the last year considerable progress has been made in many areas.

A sound financial program under the Finance Committee has been set up in which moneys donated and bequeathed to

the Los Angeles Audubon Society may be invested to help carry out projects undertaken by the Society.

The fund drive for the California Condor Sanctuary was very successful, enabling the Society to give three hundred and fifty dollars (\$350) to the support of California's only reserve for an endangered bird. Our thanks to all the members who contributed so generously, and it is sincerely hoped that this effort may be continued each year with even greater success.

The net proceeds from our last year's Screen Tours were used to award half scholarships to Audubon Camp of California to Mr. Mel Carlson, director of the Griffith Park Boys Camp, Mr. Bert Shreve, Science Teacher in the Los Angeles City Schools and Mrs. Catherine Funk, volunteer group leader in Camp Fire Girls. These persons are working with young people all year and will be able to pass on to them the knowledge gained in nature study and conservation. We are looking forward again this year to another outstanding Screen Tour series. Since a full auditorium is an inspiration to speaker and audience, it was decided to try to accomplish this by having only one series, to be held on Thursday evenings at John Burroughs Junior High School on the following dates: Oct. 20--Allan D. Cruickshank, RIVER OF THE CRYING BIRD; Dec. 8--William Anderson, DESIGN FOR SURVIVAL; Feb. 16--Robert C. Hermes, ANIMALS AT HOME AND AFIELD; March 16--Roger Tory Peterson, WILD EUROPE; April 27--Patricia Bailey Witherspoon, KANGAROO CONTINENT. We urge all members and their friends to support these programs, not only for their own enjoyment, but to help send more youth leaders to Audubon Camp each summer.

The library at Audubon House is being used more each month by members and Junior High School students. Over two hundred books have been received from the estate of Miss Grace Tower, one of our former very active members.

The museum has been visited by over thirty youth groups, Bluebirds, Brownies, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Camp Fire Girls.

The Society has assumed the sponsorship of the former Junior Zoological Society which meets the first Saturday of each month under the direction of Mr. John Peebles, director of the Fern Dell Museum in Griffith Park, and a member of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Field classes in bird identification were conducted to help those who wish to become more expert in this activity. It is planned to make these a regular feature in our yearly field trip program.

A new format was introduced for the Year Book. The calendar for the entire year's activities was well received and will be continued this year.

The Society has been active in supporting many conservation efforts and during the next year will alert its membership more fully to those issues needing individual letters to legislators. Our members can wield a great influence for conservation through their letters.

The Board and the Editor of the WESTERN Tanager will welcome correspondence from the members giving constructive ideas which may be used in the future to further the aims and purposes to which the Los Angeles Audubon Society is dedicated.

THIRD WEDNESDAY FIELD TRIPS

Field trips, this year, begin in October. Edna Burt, so long a devoted and fine leader of the third Thursday field trips is planning to move from our city, worse luck for Los Angeles Audubon. Dorothy Lilly has generously offered her skill and knowledge in taking over. The day of the trips - to begin in October - has been changed from third Thursday to third Wednesday. Edna Burt, while still available, will lend her help. Needless to say, thanks from all of us go to these two birders.

Hugh Weiser

THURSDAY MORNING MEETINGS

"Vertical Birding" or "Life Zones" is the theme for the coming season of Thursday Morning Meetings. Mrs. Mary Hood will be lecturer for most of these.

Here in Southern California's deserts, foothills and high mountains, all six zones are present and easily reached. To know the relation between birds, plants, and animals to each other and to their environments is to add much to our appreciation of nature.

Real study will be a requirement for the course. But with the competent teaching of Mrs. Hood, this will be a most profitable task. Slides made by the Hoods will be used to illustrate the lessons.

For those interested in advance study there is a leaflet, prepared by Mrs. Hood, "Life Zones", on sale at Audubon House. Price five cents. Besides containing a detailed explanation of zones, there is a chart showing elevations of zones and a list of reference books on the subject.

It is hoped there will be a large and interested attendance for these classes.

For the September meeting Mr. Lloyd Martin, of great experience in entomology -- 25 years at Los Angeles Museum -- will speak on Butterflies and Moths of the Southwest.

Olive Alvey

The mallard duck is the most abundant duck in the world.

SALTON SEA SARGO POPULATION ZOCMS

Sargo, a perch-like fish, introduced into Salton Sea from the Gulf of California in 1950 have experienced a virtual population explosion in the past year. They are now abundant throughout the Sea. Most are young fish in the 5 to 7 inch class but Sargo up to 12 inches are common in the angler's catch. Among the finest of all fish for eating purposes, Sargo are easily caught on almost any small bait and provide good sport on a light rod. The Department of Fish and Game seine hauls also revealed an increasing number of young Corvina in Salton Sea, giving promise of continued good fishing for this tackle buster that grows to 30 lbs. in weight in its native home in the Gulf of California.

* * * * *

THE UNINVITED

So many of you are writing to ask about starlings. In 1890 sixty of these European birds were imported and released in Central Park in New York City. By 1942 this species had made its way already to the Pacific Coast. The starlings explode into tremendous populations, have noisy and messy roosting habits, and can strip a tree of ripe fruit in short order. The pattern of invading starlings is an exploratory visit by a small flock with breeding and nesting within the area several years later. The Sacramento Wildlife Refuge now has hundreds of them in the winter. Soon they will be nesting in quantity in our valleys, and will be driving out some of our attractive western species such as bluebirds, flickers, and woodpeckers. On the plus side of the ledger, the starling's diet includes many insects, weed seeds, and wild fruits along with the grain and orchard crops.

An excellent article on this uninvited newcomer appeared in the April issue of Sunset Magazine.

Mrs. Frank Reineh, Bird Chairman
California Garden Clubs

BUENA VISTA LAGOON ASSOCIATION

A progress report concerning the Buena Vista Lagoon Project.

On April 30, 1960 the Board of Governors of the Nature Conservancy gave final approval and accepted the Buena Vista Lagoon as its second project in California.

A permanent project committee in the Oceanside-Carlsbad area has been organized. This committee is now contacting the property owners who have offered their submerged lands in the name of the Nature Conservancy. When these contracts have been completed the committee, headed by Mr. David Rorick of Oceanside and Mr. Don Bleitz of Los Angeles, will negotiate with the property owners who have not committed their lands to the Conservancy. While a few of these owners are asking an exorbitant price per acre, we as of this date and after fifteen years of fairly constant worry and work, are extremely hopeful that the project will be successful.

You will doubtless hear from us again when the fund-raising campaign is about to be launched. We do thank you for your continued interest.

Laura R. Shaw, Secretary
2034 Lincoln Street
Oceanside, California

* * * * *

SOME NOTES FROM OUTDOOR CALIFORNIA

Trout take a Plane Trip

Last year the State Department of Fish and Game "planted" a total of 6,540,927 trout by twin-engined airplane. Of these, nearly 4,000,000 were rainbows, most of the rest eastern brook trout.

Last year hunters killed over 52,200 deer in the state, a larger number than usual.

 *
 * COME TO TEA!
 *
 * You are cordially invited
 * to attend Los Angeles Audubon
 * Society's Annual Tea. It is
 * to be given at the home of our
 * First-Vice President and his
 * wife, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Small.
 *
 * Sunday, October 2
 * 2 to 5 o'clock
 *
 * 3028 Cavendish Drive
 * Los Angeles 64
 *
 * Go west out Pico to Motor
 * Ave. Turn left on Motor, then
 * left on Forester. Two blocks on
 * Forester to Cavendish.
 *
 * RSVP
 *
 * Call VE 7-2272
 * NO 1-8036
 * HO 7-9495
 * WE 9-7403
 *
 * *****

"Exploiting the Unexploited"

From the May number of OUTDOOR CALIFORNIA, published by the California Department of Fish and Game.

A small mollusk known as the Bean Clam or Wedge Shell is extremely abundant this year on several sand-swept beaches of Southern California. A two and one half mile stretch of beach above and below the Huntington Beach pier was estimated to contain nearly 3 billion clams. These little shell fish are from three quarters to one inch long and usually live just below the surface of the sand. On some beaches this year they form a pavement-like band in the inter-tidal zone that may be 150 feet wide and extend for ten miles. In the center

of such a bed there may be 1,000 to 4,000 clams for every square foot of beach.

They are avidly eaten by many surf fishes, sting rays, and birds. They may be gathered by the bucket full. When washed and steamed they make one of the finest clam broths ever brewed. Any one over 16 is required to have a valid angling license to gather them.

According to the books their appearance in large numbers is not frequent and for many years very few may be found.

MOUNT ASAMA

Several years ago bird lovers in Japan were greatly disturbed at the plan of the United States Army of using Mount Asama for a drill ground. Asama-Yama is an active volcano over 8,000 feet high, about 150 miles south west of Toyko, which Japanese bird lovers were endeavoring to have maintained as a wild life sanctuary. Fortunately, possibly due to opposition from the conservationists, the army cancelled its plans and the area is now conserved. A letter from Mr. Yosochi Inone, a member of the Japan Wild Bird Society, of which there are now over 1500 members, tells of the XII International Congress for Bird Preservation held in Tokyo from May 24 through the 28th, this year. After the meetings he attended a birding trip with representatives of various countries through the forests and over the fields of Mt. Asama. He tells of his pleasure at meeting Mr. Roger Tory Peterson and other ornithologists from abroad.

Geo. T. Hastings

1960-61 Screen Tours - Remember them, buy tickets, go to them. Anderson - Cruikshank - Hermes - Peterson - Witherpoon - What a lineup!

President: Mr. James W. Huffman 2912 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach
Registrar of Members: Mrs. Robert Sandmeyer 355 Elm St., Burbank

CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER, 1960

- SEPT 1 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING - Always open to interested members.
- SEPT 13 TUESDAY EVENING MEETING, 8:00 P.M. in Great Hall, Plummer Park, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. A social evening. Members will show slides taken on vacation and birding trips during the past summer. Anyone who has slides to show, contact program chairman before meeting. Light refreshments at close of evening. Bob Blackstone, Chairman.
- SEPT 22 THURSDAY MORNING MEETING, Long Hall, Plummer Park - 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 M. Mr. Lloyd M. Martin, assistant curator of entomology, L. A. County Museum, will talk on "Butterflies and Moths of the Southwest". Kodochrome slides of Upper Sonoran Zone insects. Specimens from Audubon House Museum. Social hour afterwards. Summer experiences related. New members and friends especially invited. Programs for 1960-1961 discussed. Bring lunch. Olive Alvey - Chairman.
- OCT 2 ANNUAL TEA, at home of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Small, Sunday, 2:00 to 5:00 P.M. 3028 Cavendish Drive, Los Angeles 64. RSVP VE 7-2272.

* * * * *

CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION PESTICIDES COORDINATION BILL (S.3473) SIDETRACKED - WILDERNESS BILL REVISED: The new number is S.3809, and it is essentially the same, incorporating several satisfactory amendments.

Conservationists are asked to follow the sportsmen's lead by Madison (Wisconsin) Audubon Society. Buy hunting licenses and/or Federal Duck Stamps. Income from these sources are declining. Federal Wildlife refuges are purchased with money that comes almost entirely from hunters.