

LAND OF THE WIDE-AWAKES

by Herb Clarke



The Florida Keys hang like a string of pearls from the southern tip of Florida and at the end, about 70 miles west of Key West, is a group of coral islands called Dry Tortugas. In 1513, the Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon named them Las Tortugas, which in Spanish means The Turtles, because of the great numbers of turtles he found breeding there. In later years the name evolved into Dry Tortugas because there is no fresh water available on these islands. The Tortugas are now the site of Fort Jefferson National Monument administered by the National Park Service.

A group consisting of Arnold and Mimi Small and their two children, Jim Huffman, Olga and myself finally realized a long cherished dream when we visited these islands in July of 1964. On recommendation of a friend we arranged by mail to charter an excellent boat out of Key West. This was to be our home for the duration of our visit to the Dry Tortugas. There are no tourist facilities and, until very recently, no regularly scheduled public transportation was available to the Monument. You can now take a fast boat which makes a one day excursion out and back from Key West twice a week.

Fort Jefferson was started in 1846 as part of a chain of seacoast defenses from Maine to Texas. Construction continued for some 30 years but the Fort was never finished as improved cannon made this type of military installation obsolete. Furthermore, trouble was encountered in building firm foundations on the shifting sands and the walls began to settle and crack. The Fort is a huge structure being over a half mile in circumference and with walls 8 feet thick and 50 feet high.



Fort Jefferson was used as a prison from 1861 to about 1874, with four of the men convicted of implication in the Lincoln assassination being sent there in 1865. In 1874 the Fort was abandoned because of hurricane damage and a series of yellow fever epidemics. In the late 19th century the Navy used the Fort as a refueling base; the battleship Maine was refueled here prior to her ill-fated trip to Cuba in 1898. During World War I the Tortugas were used as a seaplane base. The Fort then fell into ruin and was virtually forgotten until the National Monument was established in 1935.

To us the most interesting part of the Monument was its wildlife, especially the birds. One of the islands is called Bush Key and is the nesting site of over 100,000 Sooty and Noddy Terns. During the early 1900's commercial egg raiding reduced the colony to only about 4000 birds, but careful protection has restored the colony to its present strength. Bush Key is the only known nesting site of these two species of terns in the continental United States. These birds are commonly called "Wide-awakes," as they are active 24 hours a day; we were serenaded by their raucous cries all night long while anchored just off the island. These pigeon-sized terns range out

(continued on Page 42)

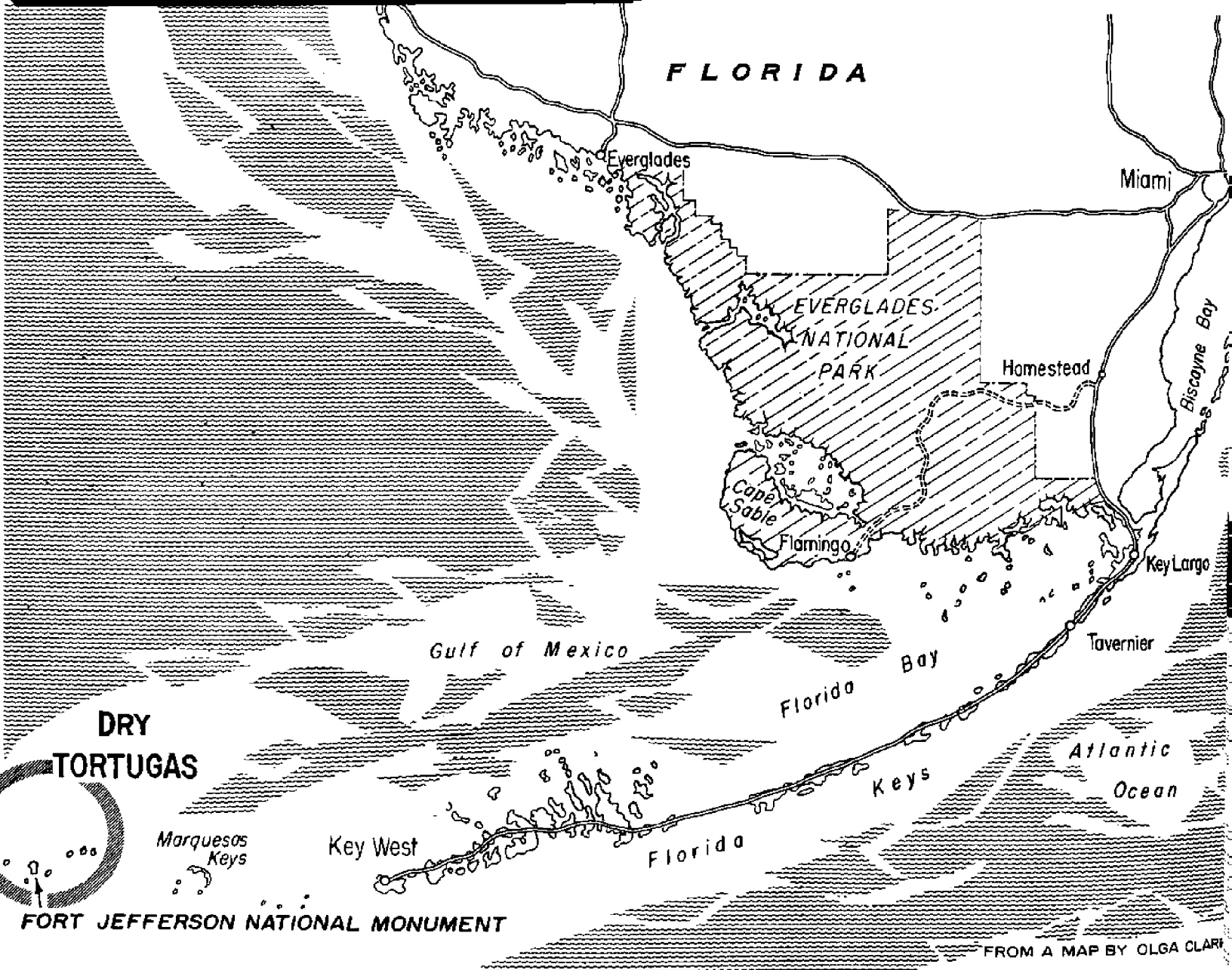
Land of the Wide-Awakes

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as far as 200 miles, feeding by snatching on the wing small fish and squid which jump out of the water in trying to escape their underwater enemies.

We obtained permission to photograph the birds on Bush Key and, accompanied by one of the park rangers, spent an exciting morning on the island. The Sooty Tern's nest is no more than a slight depression in the warm sand in which they lay one egg. They were fairly wary when we approached to photograph them, not allowing us to get closer than 25 feet.





The Noddy Tern builds a nest in low shrubbery in which they also lay a single egg; these terns were much more tame and allowed us to get within about 6 feet. Roseate Terns were also nesting on a nearby key, or island, which looked like nothing more than a sand spit. This island is called Hospital Key because, during the yellow fever epidemics, the sick men were kept in isolation here. The Roseate Terns were extremely wary and would not allow us to get close enough to photograph them. Another interesting and conspicuous bird found on

Land of the Wide-Awakes



Photos by Herb and Olga Clarke

About the Author.

A native of Pennsylvania, Herb Clarke tells us he first became interested in birds while earning his merit badge for bird study in the Boy Scouts. Birding has been his consuming interest ever since. Herb attended UCLA for some two years and was one member of a quintet of young men who birded together for several years, the other members being Rolf Mall, Bob Pyle, Bob Taylor, and Arnold Small. It was during a period of military service in Louisiana that Herb met and married his wife Olga. He is a salesman by profession, specializing in industrial sales. His chief interest now is in the photography of birds and has been for the past ten years.



the Tortugas is the Man-O-War or Frigate Bird. This is one of the most graceful of all the soaring birds and we delighted in watching them glide effortlessly on their seven foot wingspread in the thermal updrafts above the Fort. They do not breed on the islands but come here to steal food from the terns.

The three days we spent at the islands went much too quickly, what with exploring the huge Fort, photographing, swimming, and fishing in the crystal clear water among beautiful coral formations. All in all, this was a most enjoyable and interesting trip and we all resolved to return some day to the island of the "Wide-awakes."





HEADQUARTERS, LIBRARY AND NATURE MUSEUM LOCATED AT AUDUBON HOUSE
 PLUMMER PARK, 7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 46. 876-0202
 HEADQUARTERS CHAIRMAN: MRS. MARTHA EDENS
 REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS: MRS. RUSSELL WILSON

ARNOLD SMALL, *President*
 MRS. DONALD L. ADAMS, *Executive Secretary*

JANUARY 1965

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30

January

- Jan. 7 THURSDAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 7:30 P.M., Audubon House.
- Jan. 9 SATURDAY FIELD TRIP Lake Norconian. Meet at the Union Oil Co. station on Milliken Ave. in Norco at 8:00 A.M. Take San Bernardino Freeway to a point about ten miles east of Ontario. Take Milliken Ave. turn-off and continue south to Norco. An alternate route would be the Santa Ana Freeway and Riverside Freeway (91) to Corona, then north to Norco. We should find a good concentration of wintering ducks and water birds. Bring lunch.
- Leader: Arnold Small VE 7-2272
- Jan. 12 TUESDAY - EVENING MEETING 8:00 P.M., WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK, 647 N. San Vicente Blvd. (between Santa Monica Blvd. and Melrose Ave.). Dr. Kenneth Stager, Curator of Birds and Mammals of the Los Angeles County Museum, will speak on "The Cheney Ornithological Expedition to the Uluguru Mountains of Tanganyika, East Africa". Dr. Stager has been a good friend of the Society for many years and his always interesting programs are favorites with our members. His talk will be illustrated with color slides.
- PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING PLACE FOR THIS MEETING ONLY.
- Chairman: Don Adams 372-5536
- Jan. 20 WEDNESDAY CONSERVATION MEETING 7:30 P.M., Audubon House. The group will discuss conservation problems. If you are interested in having a better understanding of our conservation issues, particularly the local ones, and would like to find out what YOU can do about them, don't miss this meeting.
- Chairman: Bill Watson
- Jan. 24 SUNDAY PELAGIC TRIP Leave Oxnard at 7:30 A.M. on the "Old Timer" for off-shore birding around the Channel Islands. We will look for Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Black Oyster-catchers and wintering alcids. Wear warm clothing, bring lunch and hot drinks, and remember your motion sickness pills. Fare: \$8.00. Make check payable to Los Angeles Audubon Society and mail to Mr. Arnold Small, 3028 Cavendish Dr., Los Angeles, Calif. 90064.
- Leader: Arnold Small VE 7-2272
- Jan. 24 SUNDAY BIRDING IN THE CITY PARKS This is a repetition of last year's popular trip and is planned as an alternative for those not taking the pelagic trip on this date. Meet at Fern Dell in Griffith Park at 8:00 A.M. Bring lunch.
- Leader: Bill Watson For information call Audubon House: 876-0202
- Feb. 4 THURSDAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 7:30 P.M., Audubon House.
- Feb. 5 FRIDAY - LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER SEE DETAILS AND RESERVATION BLANK INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE.
- Feb. 10 WEDNESDAY - WILDLIFE FILM "Wilderness Trails", by Charles T. Hotchkiss of Homestead, Florida. 7:45 P.M., John Burroughs Junior High School, 600 S. McCadden Place. In this film, produced and narrated by Mr. Hotchkiss, a great variety of animals, large and small, feathered and furred, are shown in their natural environments. Four National Parks are represented. Single admission...\$1.25 Students...

50¢. Proceeds from Wildlife Films go toward Audubon Camp Scholarships and other educational work of the Society.

Chairman: Laura Lou Jenner RI 8-7510

Feb. 13 SATURDAY - SUNDAY FIELD TRIP Morro Bay. This is one of the best areas in
 14 Southern California for wintering coastal migrants. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the foot of
 Morro Rock. Most of us will go up Friday night, in order to have a full day Saturday
 and a half day Sunday for birding.

Leader: Bob Blackstone CR 6-3879



AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

To Friends of Bert Harwell:

Do you remember Bert Harwell? Undoubtedly many of you have missed him in recent years and have wondered about him. As a neighbor, friend, fellow-wildlife photographer and lecturer, I have known that he has been ill for several years and has not been able to go far afield in the work that he loved so dearly. The enclosure will tell you that Bert died in July. When you read his obituary, you will feel as I do, that Bert Harwell's was a well-spent life. He left the world better than he found it.

I wonder if you know that Bert Harwell was the first Audubon Screen Tour lecturer? He was the pioneer who started the program twenty years ago, and continued making films and influencing people of all ages everywhere to love, enjoy and cherish the natural world. His sphere was the American continent. He was never too busy to show a film for a cause, or to help physically and financially with projects relating to conservation. He was an Associate Director and one of the contributing sponsors of the Audubon Canyon Ranch, the Nature Study Center and Sanctuary on Bolinas Lagoon being purchased by the Golden Gate and Marin County Audubon Societies.

The Audubon Societies of California, who knew Bert so intimately and who value his dedication to our own interests, have decided to establish a living memorial to him at Audubon Canyon Ranch. We are accepting contributions from his friends to create a nature trail at the Center, which will be known as the Harwell Trail. It will be marked with a suitable plaque, stating that the trail is a memorial from the people in North America. You will agree with the appropriateness of a memorial nature trail for leader and teacher who stimulated so many people throughout our continent to follow this best of all trails.

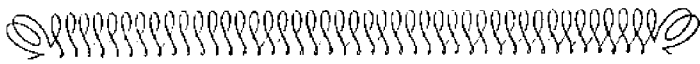
If you are a member of an Audubon Society, or of an Audubon lecture-sponsoring organization, wishing to participate in this opportunity to honor Bert's memory, I suggest that you print this letter in your bulletin, and announce it at your next Audubon lecture. Your organization will undoubtedly wish to make a contribution, and so will individuals who knew Bert or who believe in helping along nature education for people in general and children in particular. Any amount will be acceptable and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Saurel Reynolds

Member, Associate Board of Directors

T O O
 T I R O N . O



AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

By Otto Widman

November 14

Nelson Metcalfe of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society took those of us from Los Angeles for a tour of his well-studied area. He knew where to look for the 77 species that were seen in little more than half a day's search. We began at the slough to count up gulls (of special note a Mew Gull), herons (many Black-crowned Night Herons), ducks (Baldpate, Red-head), a Black Brant, plus the more common birds as blackbirds, finches, grebes, towhees, etc. There were 41 species here.

In the Botanic Gardens above the Mission were Acorn Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Bewick's Wrens, Audubon's Warblers, and some Golden-crowned Sparrows. Down on Goleta Beach were the White-throated Swifts, Kingfisher, Royal Terns, Black-chinned Hummers (14 species in all). Eighteen species were at the Sewage Disposal Plant. First there was a close view of a Red-tailed Hawk, then Pectoral Sandpipers, Water Pipits.

The Starlings have come to stay--flocks of them. The Dunlins were with the Semipalmated Sandpipers and Snipes. Overhead the Violet-green Swallows circled while along the bank were the Horned Larks. In the oaks were the Downy Woodpeckers. Then on the cliff overlooking the Airport and lagoon we saw Kites and Long-billed Curlews. Many Black-crowned Night Herons flew away from their perches along the bank. I saw both Black and Say's Phoebes. Perched for all to see were Kites and many Great Blue Herons and Common Egrets.

We were glad to have the Keith Axelsons with us again. Bill Watson judiciously left the guiding to Mr. Metcalfe and, as I said, he knew where to look and we thank him for this.

November 19

At Bill Watson's Thursday Night Conservation Meeting we discussed the proposed Sewage Disposal Plant at Tapia Park--supposedly right along the year-round stream to the south. I am happy to say it is in the 'suppose' stage and hasn't gotten any further. The Tramway to the top of Mt. San Jacinto came under fire apparently because of a request for expansion at the top. Then the Master Plan for the Harbor Park at Pacific Coast Highway and Vermont Avenue was brought out and we were shown which parts had been set aside for bird sanctuaries and nature study. We little realize it, but the primary purpose of the Audubon Society is conservation. More stress is placed on conservation than on bird watching. The wildlife areas are preserved for the study of

birds. Harbor Park is an in-city area set aside for birds, yet little or nothing is being done to develop it, use it, or even retain it for the people.

November 22

The Field Trip to Big Bear Lake and High Mountain Area was cancelled because of the early snows and inclement weather. We will just have to look for Lewis's Woodpecker some other time.

November 25

"Wildlife in the Eastern Woodlands" concentrated on the beaver--his return and his role in the immediate environs of his home. Earl L. Hilfiker has given us some extremely fine studies to remember. In 1930 the farmer began leaving his farm and much of this land has returned to the native state, showing an increase in deer, beaver, turkeys, raccoon, black bear. In some unbelievable shots Mr. Hilfiker shows us the beaver carrying mud clutched to his breast for the building of his lodge.

December 8

More than 160 members and friends filled Plummer Hall for the monthly meeting of the Society. Frances Kohn reported on the Tucson National Audubon Society Convention, the field trips and programs--details of which have appeared in previous Tanager editions. The 'Bird of the Month' was David Gaines with such finds as a Summer Tanager at the Hillcrest Golf Club; a Dickcissel, Curve-billed Thrasher and Grey-headed Junco at Salton Sea. Marion Wilson reported seeing a Rusty Blackbird at Borrego Springs Nov. 27 and a Saw-whet Owl at Chantry Flats Nov. 21. Jim Lane of the Sea and Sage Audubon Society reported on the White-tailed Tropic Bird seen near Garden Grove by only three members of the special field trip there Dec. 5. Russ Wilson read a letter regarding the Bert Harwell Living Memorial Nature Trail. We were happy to hear that there are now 41 Whooping Cranes at Aransas, a gain of three over last year. Ten young returned.

After seeing President Arnold Small's pictures of Africa we can see why he wants to return. Besides many large and spectacular game animals and the incomparable and varied scenery, there were the birds--over 600 species, broken down into 20 major categories, plus many lesser ones. There were five species of bustards, 19 bee-eaters, 16 hornbills, 22 bulbuls, 5 rollers, 46 weaverbirds, and 11 species of iridescent sunbirds (our nearest equivalent would be the hummingbirds). The thrushes, swallows, flycatchers came almost as a catalog of birds of Africa. To expedite identification and photography, many of the birds were mist-netted and held by the thighs for perfect portraits, then released. But the others, the many species of big hawks and vultures, numbering 42 in all, seemed to fill the land. Some, like the Secretary Bird, were spectacular. The Crested Crane--two species--has been featured on the governmental Shield of Uganda.

The evening closed on a festive mood with refreshments, Christmas trees on the table, and lots of talking in the hall. We want to thank Mr. Small for this second jaunt into Central Africa.

New Displays in Audubon House

Visitors to Audubon House recently may have peeked into the small room at the west end of the House, through which we normally enter, and noticed that work was in progress on the exhibits for which Vernon Mangold painted the backgrounds. The Headquarters Committee reports that Mary and Bill Hood arrived one day early in December, loaded with the necessary materials, and began to set them up. By the time this issue of the *TANAGER* appears in print, this work may be ready for viewing.

For the valuable time and talents donated for these exhibits, the Society owes a debt of gratitude to the Hoods and to Mr. Mangold.

Los Angeles Audubon Society, Inc.

EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTIONS

The following actions were taken by the Executive Board of the Los Angeles Audubon Society at its regular meeting on December 3rd.

Voted to appropriate \$25.00 for a contribution in the Society's name to a memorial to the late Bert Harwell in the form of a Nature Trail to be developed at Audubon Canyon Ranch.

Voted to send a letter commending the Morongo Valley Community Services District for its action in establishing Covington Park as a bird sanctuary. Voted to support the Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club in its resolution to the U. S. Forest Service urging that all trails in the Los Padres National Forest be closed to vehicular traffic.

The Western Tanager

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
LOS ANGELES AUDUBON SOCIETY

7377 SANTA MONICA BLVD., LOS ANGELES 46, CALIFORNIA
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FIELD NOTES

Arnold Small

CONSERVATION

Bill Watson

AUDUBON ACTIVITIES

Otto Widman

TYPING

Helen Sandmeyer
Caroline Adams

FOLDING & MAILING

Shirley Wells
Marion Wilson
Catherine B
Stefanie Mangold

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM

"Wilderness Trails"

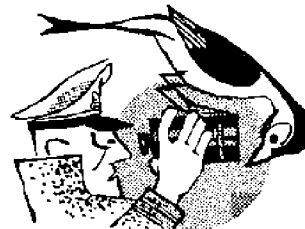
CHARLES T. HOTCHKISS

Wednesday,
February 10th.

John Burroughs Junior High School

600 S. McCadden Place

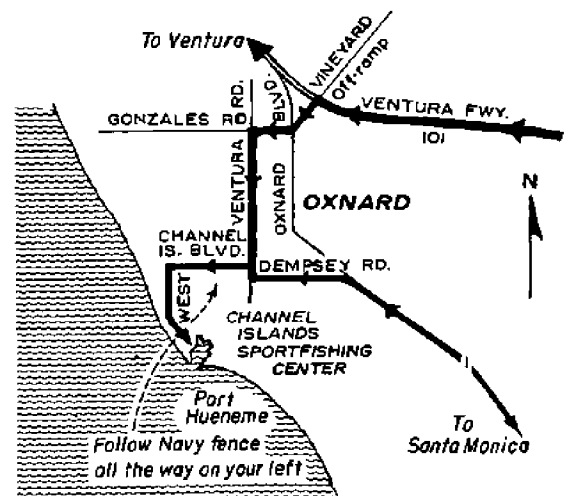
7:45 P.M.



PELAGIC TRIP

Vicinity of the
Channel Islands

SEE CALENDAR PAGE FOR DETAILS



SPECIAL NOTICE

Members should contact Audubon House promptly regarding a change of address in order not to miss any issues of the *TANAGER*. If for any reason you fail to receive your *TANAGER*, also contact Audubon House.

southern california BIRDS



By Arnold Small

After an auspicious beginning, the fall migration in Southern California proved even more remarkable than first suspected. Although the flight of migrant landbirds tapered off somewhat during November, a number of startling sea-birds again brought the birders out en masse, and inaugurated the rare-bird-alert with a thumping good start. The Blue-footed Boobies at Puddingstone Reservoir were not the first of their kind reported in this region. In past years, there have been scattered records of birds on the Colorado River, the north end of the Salton Sea, and off San Diego, while single birds were picked up in Pasadena (alive) and Thermal (dead). Still, the probability of seeing this species in life in the United States was exceedingly slim.

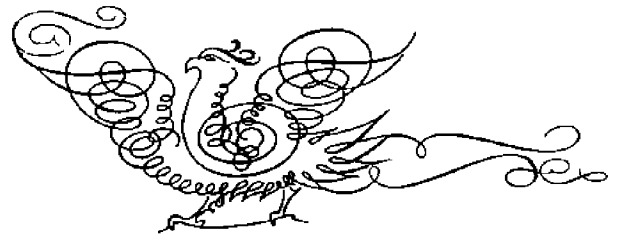
When Leo Best of Azusa phoned in to Audubon House on Monday, Nov. 16, that he suspected he had found two Blue-footed Boobies at Puddingstone Dam, the wheels began to turn. Herb Clarke was alerted and rushed out on the following Wednesday (Nov. 18) after chafing at the rain-caused delay on Tuesday. He phoned me at school that afternoon to confirm the identification, and without stopping to pick up either 'scope or binoculars, I followed his trail to Puddingstone late that same Wednesday. Just as the sun was setting, I located the birds sitting on their favorite buoys, but fretted at the extreme distance. In desperation, I pleaded with the owner of a hydroplane for a quick ride out to the buoys and was treated to an exhilarating ride at 61 mph (sans seat belts) twice around the lake before grinding to a halt before the birds at a distance of less than five feet. Larry Sansone and David Gaines witnessed these antics from the comfort of the shore and the security of the telescope. After these several confirmations, the exodus commenced, and by now, anyone who has so desired has taken the leisurely drive to Puddingstone to witness the near-miracle for themselves.

Interrogation of the employees at the lake has revealed that the boobies had been present there since early October. As to their arrival at Puddingstone--no one can say for sure. Perhaps they followed the Gulf of California north from their nesting islands on the west coast of Mexico, and being young (and inexperienced) birds they blundered their way northward, following the Colorado River to the Salton Sea area, and still possessed of some mysterious urge, drove on northward (perhaps in fog) alighting at last on the only sizable body of water in sight. They seemed quite comfortable, tame (as befits their

breed), and well fed, and no doubt will remain "locked in" at Puddingstone for some time, since no matter in which direction they choose to fly from the lake, they will find no more suitable habitat for them. Recall that the famous Brown Booby at Martinez Lake on the Colorado River remained for almost two years and until it had molted to adult plumage. In some ways, the inexperience of youth can prove to be a blessing after all.

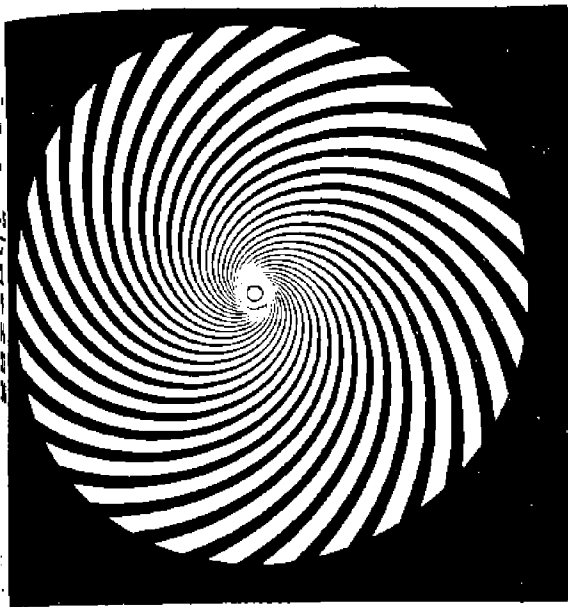
A more frustrating experience awaited those who sought the longed-for White-tailed Tropicbird whose reappearance in this region after a disappointing (for us) stay last June, seemed almost too good to be true. Wes Hettrick of Santa Ana alerted me on Nov. 30 to the fact that the bird had reappeared, and this time had shown a marked preference for radio-controlled powered aircraft being flown near Santa Ana. The rare-bird-alert swung into action and by the following Saturday, Dec. 5, more than sixty panting birders awaited the celebrity's arrival, never doubting it would come. Most of us were still flushed with the success of the booby. However, most of us were doomed to disappointment, for the only ones who saw the bird, Shirley Wells, her mother, and Eleanor Pugh, were doing what they were supposed to be doing--birding, while the rest of us complacently sat around nibbling sandwiches and visiting. The bird made one quick pass near the field, scorned the acclaim awaiting him (!), and departed for what has so far proven to be the last time.

Never had so much talent assembled together for a rare bird, but it would have none of it. A few diehards reappeared again on Sunday, but clearly, the bloom was off the rose, and even the knowledge that there were present a few even less fortunate than we (three who had driven through the night from San Francisco), failed to dispel our gloom. However, always the optimist, I feel that the White-tailed Tropicbird still haunts our region, roosting and feeding somewhere near Newport Bay, and fame and glory await the diligent birder who shouts "tropicbird - ahoy!".



Donations Received

From Mrs. Ruth McCune: 39 slides purchased from the National Audubon Society, to add to the Los Angeles Audubon Society's collection.
From Mrs. Florence Myers: \$ 5.00
From Mrs. Randolph Tucker: \$25.00
From Mrs. Moulton Johnson: \$ 5.00



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Friday, February 5, 1965



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