

The Phainopepla

Bulletin of the California Audubon Society

Vol. I

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No. 1

The Mockingbird

"Oh, dear, I wish folks were not so particular and so fond of sleeping at night," sang the gay Mockingbird from the branch of the pepper tree by my window. "It gets me into lots of trouble when I am only trying to be happy and help my mate be contented while she broods her eggs in our nest. It surely is no fun to sit there all night, and never know when some greedy old cat is going to try to eat you up, but if I sing my best my mate does not mind so much. I like to sing best on moonlight nights. Isn't the moon just grand! Don't you just love to sit and look at it, and watch the queer shadows it makes as it shines through the trees? And don't you wish you could sing as I do? The man in the moon likes me for sometimes he smiles at me. Folks say he is made of green cheese, but I don't believe it. Neither does my mate. We like yellow cheese that a nice lady cuts in bits for us, but we would never think of trying to eat the moon. Would you?" The big saucy Mocker paused a moment for breath, then away he sang again, and as I listened I amused myself by following his song and noting the birds he mocked. In the spring time I could tell which of the summer migrants had arrived by his calls. Now it was *Peter, peter, peter*, as if he were trying to arouse someone by that name; now he mocked a young chicken calling for help; then the *Sweet-Maria* of the Black-headed Grosbeak; the *Whita, whita, whita* of the Kingbird, or the *Scrat* of the Phainopepla; the *Get-right-out* of the California Quail was a good imitation, while the scamp even tried to imitate the Meadow-lark—and so into the night he sang until he had put me to sleep and I dreamed I was being serenaded by all the birds in the world. Dear, noisy, meddling, inquisitive bird, how could we get along without you?

These long, graceful, gray birds with the white outer tail feathers and white wing patches which show in flight, stay in Southern California all the year 'round, coming tamely into our yards and building in our vines or trees. They are not found in the northern part of the State, the weather being too cold to their liking. One seldom sees them in the mountains or far from habitations. They seem to love folks and with all confidence live near them. The young are precocious little things and leave the nest when nine days old, when they can not fly but only hop about on their long legs. This causes many of them to be eaten by cats. One cannot blame the old birds for hating these felines and descending upon them most fiercely, even grabbing out fur, whenever they appear near the birds' nest. With evil intent they swoop down upon puss, just escaping her head, but scolding loudly, and puss, knowing that she cannot cope with this winged terror, hastens as fast as possible to safety. Such a scolding as goes on long after she has disappeared reminds one of a nagging female.

Oftentimes these birds seem to take possession of the grounds they have chosen as homes, driving other birds away in no uncertain manner. I have seen them chase two Robbins who had come in the winter time for a friendly visit, and one Mocker regularly stationed himself on my bird table and chased away the White-crowned Sparrows and other small birds that came for the food he did not want. "Dog in manger" he indeed acted out. And yet these birds are beneficial, eating many an uncanny worm and noxious insect during the nesting season. Sometimes they sample fruit, but for the most part they do no harm, and to me California would not be the same lovely place to live in, were they taken from it.

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Bulletin of the

CALIFORNIA AUDUBON SOCIETY
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This little Bulletin is being published by the California Audubon Society, Inc., for the purpose of keeping before the bird lovers of the West items of interest concerning bird life in both State and Nation. The birds of interest seen each month will be recorded by competent field workers; a short story about one particular bird will be told, mostly by the bird itself, for the benefit of Junior Audubon members and teachers; lectures, field day trips by Audubon members will be noted. To help defray the expenses of publication, the sum of fifty cents per year, or five cents a copy, will be charged (thirty cents a year for ten or more to one address). We hope many will want this Bulletin, which will be enlarged and improved if demand warrants it. The editor hopes that items of interest will be sent to her.

CALIFORNIA STATE BIRD CAMPAIGN

The California State-Bird Campaign, an educational contest sponsored by the California State Audubon Society, has distributed over 17,000 pieces of Nature literature to Nature Supervisors, Principals, Teachers, Bird Study Clubs, Women's Federated Clubs and other organizations free of charge since the Contest opened last February.

This has been done to aid the public in casting an intelligent vote for the bird which is to help decorate California's State Seal.

The Contest will remain open until the end of 1928 or the first two months of 1929. As only *individual* votes are counted, whether members of an organization or single, every citizen, old or young, native or foreign, is eligible.

Unlike the Presidential Campaign, one does not have to *register* before sending in his or her vote.

Twenty feathered candidates are in the field, though one is privileged to select any bird that is a native of California, found throughout California and possessing feed habits above reproach.

Do not delay too long, for you surely want to have a voice in California's State-Bird Contest as well as in the Presidential one.

Send in your vote or ask for the little booklet, "California State Bird Candidates" (price fifty cents for one copy or three for one dollar), of Mrs. F. T. Bicknell, Chairman State Bird Campaign, 319 South Normandie Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

The following birds are ahead, so far:

Bullock Oriole, 728; Valley Quail, 440; W. Meadowlark, 440; W. Mockingbird, 419; Roadrunner, 305; Anna Hummingbird, 298; Sea Gull, 194; and Western Bluebird, 116.

Georgia has just chosen the Thrasher for its State Bird.

The Science Museum, So. Kensington, London, has written our Society for all past reports and publications.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

September is always an interesting month in the bird world for several reasons. Except in rare cases the nesting duties are over and the moulting season passed. The birds are more like themselves again and many, the Mocker and Thrasher for instance, are singing again. In spite of this there is somewhat of a lull in the bird world, for the common species that have been about our homes nesting confidently have left for the South. Just why these lovely Bullock and Hooded Orioles, Black-headed Grosbeaks, gorgeous Tanagers, Russet-backed Thrushes, Kingbirds, and others, are unwilling to spend their winters with us only they know, and I fear me it must remain a secret. There is a lapse between their going and the coming of the winter visitors, a dull time for us so far as birds go. It is usually the middle or last of September before the winter visitors arrive and things seem "birdy" again.

In my summer home in the Sierra Nevada mountains, in Tulare County, I was delighted that so many birds lingered before going south. Grosbeaks, Tanagers and Orioles departed, save for a few stragglers; Bluebirds were about in large flocks, as were also the Green-backed Goldfinches and Chipping Sparrows; Linnets, and a few Purple Finches, an occasional Cassin Vireo, Western Flycatcher, Caliope Hummingbird, Wood Pewee, Gnatcatcher and Costa Hummer were seen, while a large flock of Brewer Sparrows were rifling my garden on their downward migration. There were also a few Gambler Sparrows. Warblers, too, were passing through—black-throated Grays, Pileolated, Dusky, and Audubons. Rufous Hummingbirds darted about enjoying this oasis of flowers in the mountains. California and San Diego Towhees were about, as were also Crested Jays, California and Willow Woodpeckers, Juncos, Creepers, Slender-billed Nuthatches who hourly came for suet at my bird table and on a yellow pine by

my window; Bush-tits, Doves, a family of Quail, Robins and Flickers were to be seen, while a Great Horned Owl hooted his presence at night. The Robins who had nested in my pergola had mostly started for the valleys. A few stragglers stay all winter.

Gambler Sparrows were seen in the South on the 14th of September, a Say's Phoebe on the 21st; Audubon Warblers on the 29th; San Diego Wrens were coming into the gardens; Plain Titmice, Bush-tits, Gnatcatchers, Spurred Towhees, Yellowthroats, etc. Many migrants were passing through, Pileolated, Tolmie and Lutescent Warblers among them. A Pied-billed Grebe has nested in Echo Park, L. A., and may be seen there on the island feeding four young.

SEPTEMBER 24 - 28

The Southwest Bird Study Club report the following birds seen September 24 at Playa del Rey, Lagoon and Gun Club:

Grebe, Western, California, and Hermon Gulls; Foster and Black Terns; Bald Pate Duck; Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal; Pintail and Ruddy Ducks, *White-faced Glossy Ibis, Bittern, American Egret, Sora Rail, American Coot, *Northern Phalarope, Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Dowitcher, *Knot, W. Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Godwit, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer, Snowy Plover, *Black and *Ruddy Turnstones, Marsh and Sparrow Hawks, Kingfisher, Black Phoebe, W. Flycatcher, Red-winged Blackbird, Meadowlark, Brewer Blackbird, Savanna, Belding and Song Sparrows, Cliff and Barn Swallows, Shrike, Pacific Yellow Throat, and Tule Wren.

* Uncommon.

JUNIOR AUDUBON WORK

Again we are handling the Junior Audubon bird sets and urge the organization of these groups among the children. The following material for study will, for the school year 1928-1929, be sent for every member of a Junior Audubon

Club from whom a fee of ten cents has been received: Audubon button, showing a Scarlet Tanager in color; pictures, leaflets and outline drawings of the Brown Towhee, Red-shafted Flicker, Kingfisher, Pintail Duck, Black Phoebe, and Western Meadowlark. The teacher also may receive a set for ten cents. It is not necessary to report Junior Club members' names.

Because of the growing demands upon us it became necessary to relieve Miss Pratt of the secretary's work, which Mrs. Kinsman kindly consented to undertake. Miss Pratt will be our Junior Audubon Secretary, and orders should be sent to her. A Saturday morning "Field Trips for Teachers" class is now being formed. Phone Miss Pratt for terms.

DIRECTORY

National Assn. Audubon Societies, Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, Pres., 1974 Broadway, New York City.

California Audubon Society

Lecture. The second Thursday of each month, 7:45 p. m., in the lecture room of the Los Angeles Public Library, a lecture by a good speaker will be given. Free to the public, who are cordially invited.

Field Day. Fourth Thursday of each month at 9 a. m. at the home of Mrs. H. G. Watkins, 5608 Briercliff Road, just above the western entrance to Griffith Park. Box lunch. Take first turn to left in Griffith Park and turn again to left on uphill road. Mrs. Watkins' home is just beyond real estate office on left. Park cars there. Next meeting Oct. 25.

Los Angeles Audubon

Pres. Mrs. Leonard S. Hall, 117 Wavecrest Ave., Venice. Santa Monica 61679.

Rec. Sec. Mrs. Oliver Edwards.

Meetings. First (Field Day) and third Thursdays. Indoor at State Bldg., Exposition Park, 2 p. m.

Pasadena Audubon

Pres. Mr. A. L. Hamilton, 836 North Raymond, Pasadena. Wake. 1872.

Meetings. Last Saturday evening of each month in Public Library Assembly Hall, Pasadena.

Southwest Bird Study Club

Pres. Miss Mary Mann Miller, 5928 Hayes Ave., L. A. Farfield 3677.

Sec. Mrs. Marie Juppenlatz, 4919 Malta St., L. A. Garfield 1680.

Meetings. Mondays. Oct. 8th, 9 a. m., Mrs. Hights, 330 East Ave. 55. Oct. 15, 9 a. m., Playa del Rey (pier). Oct. 22, 9 a. m., Verdugo Woodlands. Oct. 29, 9 a. m., Griffith Park (Western Ave).

Audubon Society of the Pacific

Pres. Dr. Frederick W. D'Evelyn, Phelan Bldg., San Francisco.

Sec. Mrs. Carl Smith, 563 42nd Ave., San Francisco.

Meetings. Second Thursday of each month at 8 p. m., Ferry Bldg, 2nd floor, room 19.

Publish a monthly bulletin, "The Gull."

Nature Club of Southern California

Chairman Bird Study Section, Mrs. Ada B. Maescher, Union Oil Bldg., Los Angeles.

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TWITTERS

"Birds of New Mexico," a new book by Florence Merriam Bailey. Bound in buckram, 800 pages, profusely illustrated. \$5.00. Order from N. M. Department of Fish and Game.

"A Guide to the Birds of Colorado," by W. H. Bergtold, M.D., M.Sc. \$2.25. Smith-Brooks Printing Co., Denver.

"Birds of the Ocean," by W. B. Alexander. \$3.50. Putnams.

"British Birds in Color," Oxford University Press, N. Y. \$2.50 or \$3.00.

"Denisons of the Desert," Edmund Jaegar. \$3.00. Houghton Mifflin.

"A Pocket Guide to Wild Animals." Putnams. \$3.50.