



Banding Birds at Lake Merritt

Lake Merritt, in the heart of the Oakland residential district, was made a wildlife preserve by California Legislative Act in 1869. The writer began banding ducks in January, 1926, under State and United States permits.

July 26, 1935, Lake Merritt was declared an official United States wildlife banding station, under jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Biological Survey, with the writer in official charge. A few years ago this was transferred to the Department of Interior.

In the fifteen banding seasons we have banded a total of 11,356 ducks as follows:

Sprig (pintail)	8,689
Widgeon (baldpate).....	1,329
Coot (mudhen)	1,261
Brant	2
Snow Goose	5
Mallard	57
European Widgeon	1
Spoonbill.....	11
Blue-winged Teal	1

There are five species of geese and some swans at Lake Merritt, but all have become so domesticated they never migrate. The trap forty feet by forty feet has contained 1,984 birds at one trapping. From this number we have had reports on 827 ducks, from sixteen different states, Alaska, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada, and other Canadian Provinces. The farthest eastern report was from Illinois and the farthest southern report from Mexico.

Banding records have demonstrated several items of scientific value. The first and principal one is that the annual flyway migrations of the Lake Merritt ducks has been definitely established. First a pause at Tule Lake, California; next, to the southern portion of Alberta, Canada, and the western portion of Saskatchewan, Canada, where about one-half make their summer home. The flight then continues west across the Rockies, and beginning a short distance from the headwaters of the Yukon River follows the delta of that river to the Pacific. The return flight is invariably the same only in reverse.

The ducks begin arriving at Lake Merritt early in August and practically all of the flight has arrived by November first.

The second scientific item is a puzzling one. During our entire fifteen seasons of banding our records show nearly two and one-half males to one female. Why this numerical difference in the sexes should prevail we can only conjecture. Two elements may have a bearing on this disproportion: 1—The female on the nest is subject to ground and air predators, while the male is on flight, less exposed to danger. 2—Observations of wardens in the nesting regions have shown that under drought conditions, the mother will not desert her brood, perishing with them in their fruitless attempt to find water.

The third scientific item is that we have established an authentic record of the oldest known pintail (sprig). Three of this species banded in December, 1927,

were retaken in our trap in the Fall of 1940. We have been advised by the Biological Survey that these are the oldest ducks of this species on record. Hence the Lake Merritt banding operations record three ducks of the Pintail species authentically fourteen years old, as *they were adult ducks when banded*.

There is also an annual migration of about 2,000 Canvas-back Ducks, but they never come ashore, and as we are not allowed to trap in deep water, we have no record of this species.

E. W. Ehmann, Piedmont, California. May 5, 1941.



Resting Spots of Gulls

The Berkeley Aquatic Park is in the process of being developed. Land is being made, bushes and trees are being planted, flower beds are being cultivated. As the terrain changes, the bird life of the area changes; new birds come in, some leave, others remain but change their habits. One very definite and easily demonstrable alteration in habit seems interesting enough to call to the attention of THE GULL readers.

The park consists of a strip of water slightly less than one mile long and a few hundred feet wide. On the map it appears as a cigar-shaped, sheltered strip with factories and railroad yards flanking it to the east, and a broad, much traveled highway embankment cutting it off from the San Francisco Bay on the west. Protruding into the quiet water of the park itself are a number of artificial peninsulas of land just wide enough for a footpath. These peninsulas are looped so as to enclose little ponds of water of varying sizes along the borders of the park. These land-loops support no vegetation, being recently constructed, and therefore make excellent resting places for gulls, ducks, and, to a lesser extent, herons and shore-birds.

Two of these land-loops on the eastern flank of the park were particularly favored by gulls (of several species). Recently the ponds enclosed by them have gradually been filled in, for landscaping purposes, so that the peninsulas are now altogether contiguous to the mainland. The brush and earth made use of in filling in have afforded terrain and cover for House Finches and Song Sparrows, but the gulls have removed to loops which still have water between them and the mainland.

Even a casual inspection of the areas filled in will indicate that there is considerable food there for the gulls: refuse, grubs, and little trapped fish. I hazard the guess, then, that a good proportion of the gulls which enter the park are more concerned with a place to rest than with a place to eat. The bit of land which has water between it and the traffic, however insignificant a strip it may be, appears to be more agreeable to the gull's eye as a resting place.

David G. Nichols, Berkeley, California. January 27, 1941.



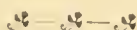
Pacific Coast Quail

Fifty years ago this part of California, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, probably held the largest gathering of Valley Quail ever known in this State. The writer was here for six months in 1885 and was in the field practically all the time. On the San Jacinto Plains, where the great airplane and army camp, March Field and Camp Haan, are now situated, were seen flocks of from a thousand to a million birds, coming to the springs for water. Today they are practically all gone, and the ranches and gardens which give protection to the few flocks can only show bunches of a dozen to fifty birds.

California and Arizona together have five species: Valley, Mountain and Gambel for our state, and Scaled and Mearn's or fool quail for Arizona. The Santa Barbara Museum has on display a double habitat group showing complete sets of

all these five varieties. The Gambel and Scaled Quail are found in coveys of from 20 to 200 birds, while the Mearn's are very scarce and difficult to find, and never below 4,000 feet elevation and in small flocks of one dozen birds. The Arizona birds do not cross to California but are found east and south in New and Old Mexico.

M. Hall McAllister, Redlands, California. May 1, 1941.



May Field Trip

On Sunday, May 18, 1941, six members and eight guests took advantage of an ideal spring day and gathered at Saint Mary's, Contra Costa County, for the May field trip. Most of the morning was spent on the property of Mr. Emile A. Pierre, where bird-life was abundant. Nesting here were House Wrens, Nuttall Woodpeckers, and Ash-throated Flycatchers. Between Moraga and Saint Mary's Station one of the members saw a Golden Eagle feeding on an opossum.

After luncheon the group continued up Las Trampas Canyon and returned to the station, leisurely birding along the way. Sixty species were seen, as follows:

California Heron	Violet-green Swallow	Tolmie Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Cliff Swallow	Pileolated Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Coast Jay	English Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	California Jay	Meadowlark
Golden Eagle	Crow	Red-winged Blackbird
Sparrow Hawk	Plain Titmouse	Bullock Oriole
Quail	Bush-tit	Brewer Blackbird
Coot	Slender-billed Nuthatch	Black-headed Grosbeak
Killdeer	Wren-tit	Lazuli Bunting
Mourning Dove	House Wren	Purple Finch
Anna Hummingbird	Bewick Wren	House Finch
Allen Hummingbird	California Thrasher	Pine Siskin
Red-shafted Flicker	Russet-backed Thrush	Green-backed Goldfinch
California Woodpecker	Western Bluebird	Spotted Towhee
Willow Woodpecker	Western Gnatcatcher	Brown Towhee
Nuttall Woodpecker	Shrike	Lark Sparrow
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Hutton Vireo	Junco
Black Phoebe	Cassin Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
Western Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo	Nuttall Sparrow
Wood Pewee	Lutescent Warbler	Song Sparrow

Members attending were Misses Danz, Roscoe; Messrs. Heyneman, Kirker, Myer, Taylor and guests Mr. and Mrs. Paul Covell; Mrs. Boot; Misses Long, Kampf, Nelson; Messrs. Bennett and Freeman.

Harold Kirker, Historian.



Arizona Hooded Oriole

Mrs. Mary L. Courtright reports that a friend asked her to see a beautiful yellow bird in a Cordyline tree in the garden of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad at Larkspur. She is quite sure that it was an Arizona Hooded Oriole, *Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*, and not a Bullock, it having no black on its head. The nest also gave corroborative evidence of this by showing a side entrance. A baby head was sticking out and on the lawn beneath was its dead brother or sister.

A colony of Brewer Blackbirds infest this locality and some of its members appeared to be harassing the oriole family. It is most likely that they destroyed the young ones and caused the adult pair to leave. On May 22 Mrs. Courtright again saw the male and the following day a beautiful yellow bird was seen by her son in a tree in their yard. The nest still remains but the orioles have evidently departed.

L. A. S.

Audubon Notes

June Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 12th, at 8 o'clock, in the Old Mint Building, Fifth and Mission Streets.

The speaker of the evening will be Mrs. Dorothy Dean Sheldon, a Life Member, who will tell us about the National Audubon Society's first State convention at Monterey.

Following there will be a motion picture taken by the Lack-Venables Expedition, "The Galapagos."

Members may bring guests.



June Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Lake Lagunitas, Marin County. Bring luncheon and additional food for supper if you wish to remain out. Coffee, etc., can be prepared at picnic grounds at Phoenix Lake.

Take the 8:10 Greyhound Bus from Fifth and Mission Station, San Francisco, to Ross. Tickets each way 35 cents. Those coming by machine may meet the main group at the old railroad station in Ross.



May Meeting: The 285th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 8th, in the Old Mint Building, with thirty-eight members and guests present. President James Moffitt presiding.

The following observations were reported:

Mr. Provoo: Below Cliff House, San Francisco, Ruddy and Black Turnstones, February 3rd; two Western Willets, 4th; Mountain Lake, Presidio, five Red Phalaropes, Willow Woodpecker, March 2nd; Lake Merced, Osprey and Bittern, 22nd. Saw a Kingfisher enter a nest in

a bank on the 24th; hundreds of Tree Swallows, April 13th; between Cliff House and Fleishhacker Pool, 31 Hudsonian Curlews, Common Loon, Spreckels Lake, Golden Gate Park, 23rd; Buffalo Paddock, two Creepers, 24th; male Cowbird, May 6th.

Mr. Rousch: Lake Merced, three Red Phalaropes, April 13th; in a garden in San Francisco, 30 Western Bluebirds, December 30th.

Mrs. J. Van Meurs, Lagunitas Road, Ross, White-throated Sparrow, April 20th.

Miss Werner: North Lake, Chain of Lakes, Red-throated Loon in full summer plumage, and Surf Scoter, April 16th. This loon was also seen by Mr. and Mrs. Stephens on the 17th, and again on the 19th with a female.

Three of our younger members, John Rousch, Robert Provoo, and Harold Kirker, furnished the main interest of the evening. John and Robert gave brief talks on some of their observations in the field, while Harold gave a more extended talk on a recent trip to Death Valley and the Imperial Valley, showing beautiful Kodachrome slides of the country.



Book Notice: "A Field Guide to Western Birds," by Roger Tory Peterson, covering the birds of the Rocky Mountain States, the Pacific States, the Pacific Northwest and the Southwest, containing forty pages of halftone illustrations, forty-eight line cuts, and six pages in full color. Price \$2.75. National Audubon Society, 1006 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

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For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mr. James Moffitt.....	California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer and Editor.....	Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....	1695 Filbert St., San Francisco
Associate Editor.....	Mr. David G. Nichols.....	1713 Dwight Way, Berkeley

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m., Little Theatre, Old U. S. Mint Building,
Fifth and Mission Streets.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.