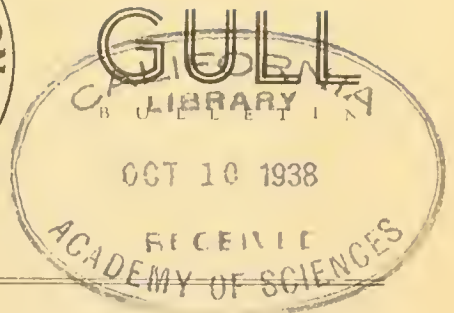


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### Friendly Jays

Since the usual belief is that Blue Jays are the most unfriendly of our garden birds, it may be of interest to learn of our experience. During the winter of 1937 into 1938, as always, we put food—sunflower seeds, bird seeds, crumbs and suet—out for the feathered residents of our garden. Before long the sharp eyes of a pair of California Jays were attracted to the gatherings of birds and so to the food. From then on if the other birds, Towhees, Song Sparrows, English Sparrows and other sparrows got any food they were in luck, for what they could not eat the jays carried off and stowed away to the last morsel. We were sorry to see this, and more sorry when we realized in the spring that the jays planned to remain on the premises.

A pair of Song Sparrows—Sam and Sally—had for years been very friendly and we had grown greatly attached to them and we knew that their territory would no longer be sacred. Also, that they no longer dared to come up on our bench or chairs to be fed soon became evident. In past years they proudly had brought their babies up to the seed piles when still feeding them. But now with the coming of the jays this was over.

A nest was built (about April 22nd) high in an old *Leptospermum* shrub grown unusually tall because of being among large trees. On pleasant days the pair joined us at picnic lunch and often sang a soft song as if begging for food. Although sorry to have the jays take possession and make the other birds unhappy, we decided to find them interesting. On May 30th we noticed that the babies were out of the nest. The parents were then more ravenous and busier than ever and when food we put out was gone we could see them searching out hidden stores in the Deodar tree or buried in the ground.

At first we saw the nestlings only at a distance but about June 17th the young jays flew down to the ground with the parents and were fed within a few feet of where we were picnicking. While the parent birds were feeding their offspring any friendliness or interest the youngsters showed toward us was discouraged and they were severely scolded and chastised. By July 14th they were indeed very greedy, having learned to eat unaided, and came close to my chair for crumbs. The parents would swoop down upon them and scolding drive them high up into the trees. However, the two young birds continued to come near. About July 11th the young jays came near while Dad was lunching alone in the garden and one hopped up to his tray. Being entirely unprepared, he was startled to have the bird so suddenly alight.

Within a few days it was a regular performance to have the babies arrive as we carried out our luncheon trays and inspect the food and help themselves to buttered bread and give the salt shaker a curious peck.

Afternoons I took my reading or sewing out of doors and on July 20th the more courageous of the two young jays came to my hand for crumbs. The other did not come that first day but soon both came up on my lap and to my hand, sometimes singly, sometimes together. They played about like two blue and gray kittens under and about our chairs. When I am alone they try to remove

the buttons from my dress and give them a mischievous tweak and rip my magazine or writing paper. As I am writing this both babies have danced upon the page, have had a feast of crackers, sung softly to me and gone on.

The most interesting and thrilling part of our experience has been that no sign of fear showed in the eyes of our two pets. No sounds disturb them. We may sing, whistle or talk to them and they are not alarmed. But the slightest movement is immediately noticed.

I noticed time after time that wee fern plants recently potted were found on the ground. Upon investigating I discovered that the baby jays had substituted sunflower seeds in the pots. When they were learning their ways of hiding things they were most comical—an oak leaf with a hole might lie on the path and a seed or crumb would be tucked through the hole. Such insecure hiding places and crumbs and seeds placed in full view on bushes or vines were soon found by the towhees and sparrows.

On July 22nd it was plain that a four o'clock snack and game were expected. When I was arranging a vase of flowers a baby jay lit on my back as I stooped over. On July 26th they came to the back porch and called loudly for food. They now come on the wing to my hand even if I am standing and come quickly to hand when we answer their screech at the door.

On July 31st one of the parent birds drove the babies from my lap, one taking refuge beneath my chair. Then the old bird sang sweetly the low soft song and came within two feet of my chair for crumbs. A baby took crackers from my lips. We had never thought that such cruel, domineering birds would become thus friendly even for food.

Since we do not care for caged birds nor leashed animals, our experience has been most interesting and entertaining. Perhaps our neighbors have not found it so, for blue jays are very noisy. But we surely would miss the flash of blue their activities lend the garden and tree tops.

To go a little further—a change in the apparent routine of the birds came the day after writing the above when a visitor came hoping to see the playful jays. No birds appeared until nearly five o'clock, when one came twice to my hand. Enough to show that reports were true. The next day, August 2nd, a neighbor took my place in the garden and the young jays came to her hand. Proving my thought that they would come to anyone in a familiar spot who remained motionless.

On August 3rd the adult birds were definitely driving the babies away from the garden, but one came at noon and one at three o'clock to be fed. On the 4th no birds came for lunch because the parents were on the lookout to drive them away and the Brown Towhee joined the chase with the adult jays. It seemed as if the Brown Towhees had met with some disaster—perhaps the jays had killed some of the towhee fledglings. Both Brown Towhees seemed determined to protect their young.

For two days only the adult jays aloof in the tree tops were seen. On August 7th the friendliest young jay came to the back porch. It cringed and whimpered as an older jay dashed it to the ground but later returned to take cracker, being alert for further trouble. Later as I was writing in the garden it came four times onto my letter. The second young bird evidently retired from the abuse of the adult jays and the Brown Towhees since it has not been seen in days.

Although the remaining baby has come to the back door and again to afternoon seed-hour, when it approached the bench at noon it was set upon by the towhees. And now it is August 14th—our summer pets now fly farther afield and their activities reach beyond the boundaries of the seclusion of their early playground. Each of the adult Brown Towhees brings a delightful baby to be fed near where we sit and goes about the routine of teaching their young with great dignity. That chapter with the jay family is over.

Helen Virginia Anthony, Alameda, California. August 26, 1938.



### September Field Trip

The September field trip was taken on the 18th to Alameda. The weather was perfect, sunny, but perhaps a little too warm for comfortable walking. Eighteen

members attended, namely: Messrs. and Mesdames Millard, Stephens; Mesdames Bær, Kelly, Mitchell, Woolsey; Misses Danz, Gilliam, MacIver, Payne, Rinehart, Taylor; Messrs. Chase, Johnson, Kirker, Power, and twelve guests: Mesdames Wilcomb, Wilkie; Misses Buchanan, Foster, Frazini, Hardy, Porter, Swanson, Tindell; Messrs. Cudaback, Holmes and Master Cudaback.

The route taken was to Bay Farm Island, then a return trip to Fernside Boulevard, where luncheon was eaten while the shore-birds fed almost at our feet. After luncheon a visit was made to the shore of the Monarch Box Factory and then some of the members again visited Bay Farm Island and returned via Mound Street.

The interesting items of the day were Barn Swallows feeding young at such a late date; an albinistic Brewer Blackbird, the white covering the whole front of head over the eye, most of the quills of one wing and a slight bit of the other wing and several tail feathers; and gulls robbing Willets of their food (see paragraph below).

This was the fourteenth trip made by the Association to Alameda. Four new species were added to the check-list: Mallard, Lesser Yellow-legs, Avocet and Say Phoebe. Thirty-eight species were seen for the day, as follows:

Pied-billed Grebe	Least Sandpiper	Caspian Tern
Mallard	Long-billed Dowitcher	Say Phoebe
Pintail	Western Sandpiper	Horned Lark
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Marbled Godwit	Barn Swallow
Sparrow Hawk	Sanderling	Western Robin
Clapper Rail	Avocet	Shrike
Coot	Glaucous-winged Gull	English Sparrow
Snowy Plover	Western Gull	Meadowlark
Killdeer	Herring Gull	Brewer Blackbird
Black-bellied Plover	California Gull	House Finch
Hudsonian Curlew	Ring-billed Gull	Bryant Sparrow
Willet	Bonaparte Gull	Alameda Song Sparrow
Lesser Yellow-leg	Forster Tern	



### Gulls Robbing Willets

While watching the shore-birds feeding on the mud flats at the Monarch Box Factory, East Oakland, I repeatedly saw gulls chasing Willets. The Willets were securing what seemed to be small clams and as they were shifting them about between their mandibles preparatory to swallowing them the gulls would approach and then the chase would begin. If the gull could overtake the Willet quickly it usually was successful in making the Willet drop the food, but in longer flights the Willet gained distance and the gull would often turn back. I felt that because so many Willets were feeding, the gulls would give up chasing one Willet to start after another individual. In this way the gull would often lose out entirely. Although at times it was difficult to identify the species of gull, it seemed that the Ring-billed Gull was the offender in most cases. Godwits were also feeding here but the gulls did not molest them. These birds do not expose the food they find but swallow it with less adjustment. In THE GULL of May, 1938, page 17, will be found a short item that describes the parasitic action of a Ring-billed Gull in robbing Long-billed Curlews.

Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California. September 18, 1938.



### Audubon Notes

**October Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 13th, at 8 p. m., in room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Albert Wolfson, whose subject will be "Experiments in Bird Migration." Members may bring guests.

**October Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 16th, to Lake Merced. San Francisco members will take Municipal car marked "K," transfer to "M" car and get off at Estero Station, where party will meet at 9:30 a. m. Bring luncheon. Leader: Gordon Bolander.

**September Meeting:** The 253rd regular meeting was held on the 8th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with forty-four members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

The following observations were reported:

Mrs. Kelly: San Francisco, Western Sandpipers, Hudsonian Curlew, September 6th.

Harold Kirker: Chain of Lakes, Western Tanager, September 1st.

Commander Parmenter: San Andreas Lake, two Caspian Terns, August 13th; Sears Point Toll Road, 35 American Egrets, 2000± Pintail Ducks, one each Red-breasted Merganser and Marsh Hawk, 9 Willets, 42 Avocets, 3 Northern Phalaropes, 20 Caspian Terns; Alvarado, 20,000± Pintail Ducks, Marsh Hawk, 23rd; 100± Shovellers, 30 Greater Yellow-legs, 29th; San Mateo Bridge, 2000± Pintail Ducks, 23rd; 500± Marbled Godwits; Mountain View marshes, 7 Black-bellied Plovers, 6 Long-billed and 1 Hudsonian Curlews, 29th; Dumbarton Bridge, White Pelicans, 1500± Pintail Ducks, 2 Marsh Hawks, 1 Caspian Tern, 29th.

Mr. Webb: Golden Gate Park, Traill Flycatcher, September 3rd; at his home in San Francisco, male Tanager, July 24th, female from middle of August to September 4th.

Miss Werner: Golden Gate Park, Wood Pewee, Pileolated Warbler, Hutton Vi-

reo, August 28th; Traill Flycatcher, September 5th.

Mr. Brighton C. Cain was the speaker of the evening and took as his subject "Some Bird Rambles in the Sierras." He gave to those present printed lists of the birds observed at his camp site and told something interesting about each observation. He showed a map of the area, bird skins and photographs, live skinks and rattlesnakes. He also exhibited partly eaten pine cones to illustrate the difference in the manner of feeding of squirrels and birds.



**Special observations** with some early winter arrival dates:

Mr. Ensign: San Rafael, two Fox Sparrows, September 20th; Larkspur, twelve Golden-crowned Sparrows, 23rd.

Mrs. Kelly: For several weeks female and immature Western Tanagers have been feeding on fallen pears in a lot adjoining her garden and the Mockingbird was still present on the 18th.

Mr. Chas. W. Michael, Golden Gate Park, Hermit Thrush bathing, September 15th.

Mr. Millard: San Francisco garden, Russet-backed Thrush and Fox Sparrow, September 17th.

Miss Werner: Golden Gate Park, Warbling Vireo, Mourning Dove, Western Flycatcher, September 10th; Allen Hummingbird, 15th.

## Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

### For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President..... Mrs. G. Earle Kelly..... 1311 Grand St., Alameda, Calif.  
 Corresponding Secretary..... C. B. Lastreto..... 260 California St., San Francisco  
 Treasurer..... Mrs. A. B. Stephens..... 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

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.