



### James Moffitt, 1900-1943

BIRD students and outdoor-lovers throughout the West have been saddened to learn of the death of James Moffitt, Curator of Birds and Mammals in the California Academy of Sciences, who was killed in an airplane crash at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, on July 2, 1943, while on active duty as a Lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve.



Born in San Francisco on March 21, 1900, the son of Dr. and Mrs. Herbert C. Moffitt, James Moffitt was a member of a family distinguished in the early history of the West. Grandson of a Forty-niner, he inherited in abundant degree the energy and courage of his pioneer forebears. During the first world war he left college at the age of eighteen to enlist as a cadet in the United States Navy; and following the attack on Pearl Harbor he unhesitatingly set aside a distinguished scientific career to offer his services to the armed forces, and cheerfully accepted an assignment of hardship and danger in the service of his country. It is known only to a few friends that he was initially disqualified for naval service by partial deafness in one ear, and that he succeeded only after persistent effort in obtaining a waiver of this minor physical disability. James Moffitt was in the war, not because he had to be, but because he refused to be kept out.

In 1918, following his return to civilian life after the first world war, Mr. Moffitt became seriously interested in the study of birds. Always a lover of the out-of-doors, he had spent many boyhood vacations at Lake Tahoe. He now began planning an account of the birds of the Tahoe region, a large undertaking which he followed persistently through the following years. He also became interested in wild geese, and

began studying them from a world standpoint. Within a few years he had become a recognized authority on this group.

In 1931, following some years in business life with the firm of Blake, Moffitt and Towne, Mr. Moffitt became a member of the staff of the Division of Fish and Game of California. In 1936 he was appointed Curator of Birds and Mammals in the California Academy of Sciences, an institution of which he had been a member since he was nineteen years old. He entered on this new assignment with characteristic energy and enthusiasm; but to those who knew him best it seemed more than this. It was as if this recognition by the first scientific institution with which he had become connected afforded him a continuous renewal of his early boyish interest in birds.

James Moffitt's largest works are left unfinished — his account of the birds of the Lake Tahoe region, and his monograph of the geese. But he left behind about eighty published scientific papers; and the work left uncompleted he abandoned for a greater.

Mr. Moffitt had been a member of the Audubon Association of the Pacific during the past seven years, and served as its president in 1941. He was also a member of the Board of Directors the National Audubon Society.

— R. C. MILLER, San Francisco, California



### The War and the Audubon

IN JANUARY, 1944 THE GULL will be twenty-five years old. In looking through the issues of 1919, we find no reference whatever to the great conflict which had been so recently terminated. Evidently the Audubon Association of the Pacific went "back to normalcy" with headlong haste. Twenty-five years from now, when THE GULL has reached the comfortable middle age of fifty, an editor may be curious to know if the bird-watchers of today were aware of what was going on in the world, and if they had any part in World War II. For the benefit of that future editor, and for the enjoyment of our readers, we are printing several letters which have been received from members of our Association who are in the military service in various parts of the country and of the world. They tell their own story.

From Pvt. DAVID G. NICHOLS, Parris Island, South Carolina, July 4, 1943:

"I find the U. S. Marine Corps to be a very snappy outfit, and am pleased to be a part of it. I am in the Officer Candidates Class, getting a very rigorous training, and after two months of shooting and drilling in this so-called Boot Camp, we move on to four or five months more of shooting, drilling, reading, and writing. We are now living in tents pitched in a field of sand. Some Least Terns and Piping Plovers have nests at one end of the plot; but I have not had time to go down and watch them. Yesterday I was surprised to see several Black Vultures (*Coragyps*) flying over our rifle range in company with the more common Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes*). The further south one goes the more common becomes *Coragyps*. Down in the tropics it is very common, and almost completely replaces *Cathartes*. Seeing the old Black Vulture here made me feel really and truly in the South. There are also Ground Doves, Mockingbirds and Shrikes on Parris Island. The Boat-tailed Grackle is the most typical South Carolina resident and the most interesting bird here to me, because I have only had occasion to see them *en passant* heretofore. On Parris Island they are nesting commonly and sporting about all over the rifle range and on our macadamized drill fields."

From Cadet JOHN H. ROUSH, Army Specialized Training Unit, University of Santa Clara, California, July 13, 1943:

"I am now back in college again, although in a greatly accelerated program. Civil Engineering is my field, and it is a wonderful opportunity. Before being transferred to the Specialized Training Program I was a machine-gunner in an Infantry Heavy Weapons Company. I imagine that most of the Audubon Association will be shocked to hear that one of their members is a shot. I guess that I shouldn't say this, but I was high man in the Battalion (1100 men) in the firing of the machine guns, and qualified as sharpshooter with the rifle and pistol.

"Unfortunately I have not been able to get out into the woods and take pictures as I used to do, but I have had a few interesting observations. I spotted my first White-tailed Kite on the way home after several months in the desert, and it certainly was a welcome sight. He was perched on a tree about sixty feet from the road, so that I had an excellent view of him. This happened about the last of April on the main highway eight or nine miles south of San Jose."

From Corporal ROBERT N. PROVVOO, July 29, 1943:

"During the past five months I was stationed in Athens, Georgia, where I attended radio operators' school. After completing my training there I was able to come home on a short furlough, and from San Francisco I am to report to Drew Field, Tampa, Florida, where I will be attached to the Thirteenth Fighter Command.

"I enjoyed my stay in Georgia very much, where I was fortunate in having quite a lot of free time, which I spent for the most part following my old hobby of bird study. I was very favorably impressed by the South, with its magnolias and antediluvian mansions, and I was thrilled to see the beautiful Cardinal in its native habitat. I spent many happy hours observing the birds on the University of Georgia Campus, where Cedar Waxwings, Cat-

birds, Mockingbirds, Towhees, Thrashers, Robins, Jays, and numerous smaller birds were very abundant.

"I would like to take this opportunity to say 'hello' to all of my old friends in the Society."

Letters from other members in the armed forces will be printed in the September issue.



### July Field Trip

THE JULY FIELD trip to Redwood Regional Park was held on July 11, and was led by Mrs. Kelly. Near the meeting place at Ascot Drive and Skyline Boulevard, Juncos, Pine Siskins, Quail, and Mourning Doves were identified. The Mourning Doves perched conspicuously on dead tops of cypresses. Our trail took us along the canyon rim over the West Ridge Trail, and then sharply down into the bottom of the canyon by way of the Redwood Trail, and along the stream at the bottom of the canyon on the Stream Trail. In the afternoon we returned over the Stream Trail to the lodge at Skyline Gate and back to the beginning point over another section of the West Ridge Trail. Not only did we feel that we had seen a great deal of the Park, but appreciated the different types of habitats and other wildlife found in each.

On the chaparral-covered, dry, warm slope of the West Ridge Trail we heard the ringing, insistent call of the Wren-tit (inseparable from this habitat), and the tinkling, plaintive notes of the Green-backed Goldfinches. Anna Hummingbirds dove in the hot air, and a Red-tailed Hawk soared above us, his red tail flashing in the bright sunlight. Near the rim of the canyon, a Red-breasted Nuthatch flew out of a planted pine, apparently in pursuit of an insect.

From the willow thickets along the stream at the bottom of the canyon came the songs of the Purple Finch, the Russet-backed Thrush and the Warbling Vireo, but also intermingling in the chorus were the songs of the Pileolated Warbler, the Junco, and the Spotted Towhee. Most memorable of all was the song of the Russet-backed Thrush, which continued throughout the day. The Western Flycatcher called repeatedly. Everyone had a superb view of this small flycatcher, the yellowish breast, the white eye-ring, as he posed for us in an open place in the foliage in a perfect northern lighting. An unexpected discovery along the Stream Trail was the identification of a Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

Following is the list of 28 species of birds identified:

Red-tailed Hawk	Wren-tit
California Quail	Bewick's Wren
Mourning Dove	Russet-backed Thrush
Anna's Hummingbird	Hutton's Vireo
Allen's Hummingbird	Warbling Vireo
Western Flycatcher	Pileolated Warbler
Olive-sided Flycatcher	California Purple Finch
Steller's Jay	Pine Siskin
California Jay	Willow Goldfinch
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	Green backed Goldfinch
Plain Titmouse	Spotted Towhee
Bush-tit	Brown Towhee
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Oregon Junco
Creepers	Song Sparrow

Members present were: Misses Elwonger, Kirk, and Young; Mesdames Bozant, Kelly, Kilham, Wallace; Mr. Kilham. Miss Jane Bozant was a guest.

— RUTH ELWONGER, Acting Historian

**Audubon Notes**

**AUGUST MEETING:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, August 12th, at 8 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds will show several reels from her colored motion picture, "Fun with Birds". A few new sequences will be shown, among them a colony of Caspian Terns, where Dr. Alden Miller makes his motion picture debut.

Guests will be welcome.

**AUGUST FIELD TRIP** will be taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Members and friends will meet at Forty-third Avenue and Fulton Street at 9:30 a.m. Due to wartime transportation difficulties the field trip directors are asking that each person arrange his own schedule in order to be at the meeting place on time. We shall proceed to the Chain of Lakes and elsewhere under the direction of the leader, Miss Selma Werner. Bring binoculars and luncheon.

**JULY MEETING:** The 310th meeting

was held on Thursday, July 8th, in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library, President Mrs. Harold C. Austin, presiding.

Mr. Bert Walker of the Junior Museum of San Francisco gave a brief history of junior museums, stating that there are only two such institutions west of the Mississippi, one in San Francisco and the other in Palo Alto. Mr. Walker explained how the activities are carried on through clubs, and then introduced some of the leaders who described their work. Four clubs were represented. The geology section showed a fine lot of specimens found on local field trips. Snakes formed another exhibit, while star charts and model airplanes covered the activities of the other groups. It was stimulating to hear these young boys talk about their interests. Everybody present felt refreshed and will look forward to again hearing from the Junior Museum naturalists in the near future.

The following were elected to membership: Miss Grace E. Ball of San Francisco, and Mrs. Edith D. Preston of Berkeley.



**Observations**

*Edited by* JUNE A. KELLY

The following observations have been reported:

Female Bullock Oriole, June 24 and 25, at 2736 Lyon Street, San Francisco; Ash-throated Flycatcher on nest, June 25, Napa; Joseph J. Webb.

Male Varied Thrush, July 29, at 140 Estates Drive, Piedmont, Gordon E. Reynolds.

One Black-bellied Plover, 2 Hudsonian Curlews, small flocks of Sandpipers, 100-plus Willets and Godwits, July 4; many Dowitchers, together with the already mentioned species, were seen July 9, Alameda; Junea W. Kelly.

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**Audubon Association of the Pacific**

Organized January 25, 1917

**For the Study and the Protection of Birds**

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Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

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Life memberships, \$50 00

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