



### Apologia Botanica

IT WAS WITH considerable mental misgivings that I went along on the May field trip of the Audubon Association to the McCoy Ranch, not that a botanist wouldn't be a welcome visitor or even a desirable proselyte, but I knew only too well that I was going with a bona fide botanical collecting press concealed in my spacious knapsack! I must confess I was even a little hypocritical about the whole procedure because I kept saying aloud that I would probably see a bird I had never seen before, while to myself I kept whispering that there should be at least one plant that would make the press a real necessity. At first all went well and I entered into the opening of the bird hunt with a show of interest made possible by the immediate dearth of wildflowers; but in a short time when I came upon two fine fruiting specimens of the California Dock, my veneer of ornithological enthusiasm completely disappeared and my plant press came out boldly for action.

The following partial list of plants seen and collected will show that my press was put to such use that even a veteran botanist might have profited by the outing.

#### IN THE LOWER ARROYO MOCHO

Shrubby Spurge (*Euphorbia Characias*). This was the exotic plant cultivated by Mrs. McCoy which attracted considerable attention.

California Dock (*Rumex californicus*). Occasional in the drier parts of the Coast Ranges. Quite distinct but not usually distinguished from *R. salicifolius*.

Vaca Godetia (*Godetia quadrivulnera* var. *vacensis*). This was the slender godetia with pretty small pinkish-mauve flowers growing near the McCoy ranch house.

Field Stone-seed (*Lithospermum arvense*). It was a real thrill to collect this European weed on the McCoy Ranch since it has not been reported from California since 1894.

Rattan's Phacelia (*Phacelia Rattanii*). This nettle-like species is widespread in the Coast mountains but is not common.

Western False Nettle (*Hesperocnide tenella*). Like the preceding, this native nettle is widely distributed in the Coast Ranges but is only rarely seen. It has vicious looking hairs like the real nettles but they are innocuous.

Jepson's False-yarrow (*Eriophyllum Jepsonii*). This is a rare plant occurring only in the Mt. Hamilton and Mt. Diablo ranges, so it was a real find!

Fetid Goosefoot (*Chenopodium Vulvaria*). Apparently this ill-smelling European weed has been reported only once before from California: In 1891 from the vicinity of Sacramento. The Germans call it by the homely but truthful name "Stinkkraut"!

Alkali Larkspur (*Delphinium recurvatum*). This was the whitish or lavender-tinged larkspur that was found on the steep banks of the arroyo.

Royal Larkspur (*Delphinium variegatum*). Gordon Bolander brought me this beautiful larkspur and the following Yellow Mariposa. Each a most beautiful flower, together they are stunning!

Yellow Mariposa (*Calochortus luteus*). We know that summer is nigh when the yellow bowls of this mariposa tulip appear amid the browning grasses of our Californian hills.

Venus' Thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *venustum*). One of California's most beautiful thistles. Did you get the ant's-eye-view of the beautiful heads of deep red flowers with the blue sky for a back-ground? What a Kodachrome it would have made!

#### IN THE ARROYO DEL VALLE

Canyon Clarkia (*Clarkia elegans*). On the trip I inadvertently gave the wrong name

to this beautiful wildflower. I called it *Clarkia pulchella*, but that is a native of the north-western U. S. where it was first found by Lewis and Clark.

Venus' Mariposa (*Calochortus venustus*). In its way this mariposa was as lovely as the song of the Canyon Wren.

Wind Poppy (*Stylomecon heterophylla*). A delicate plant of shaded canyon sides with color of flower like that of pimpernel.

Chinese Houses (*Collinsia bicolor*). Veritable cascades of color on the steep banks along the road.

So it will be seen that my bird trip was a huge success botanically. But ornithologically it was a success too: never before had I seen the Lazuli Bunting, the Chat, or the Phainopepla. Even my botanically benumbed senses of seeing and hearing were thrilled at that triple threat; and the rippling song of the Canyon Wren in the Arroyo del Valle was alone worth the whole trip.

JOHN THOMAS HOWELL

California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco

### A Letter from Harold Kirker

THE MANY FRIENDS of Harold Kirker will be interested in the letter which was recently received from him. He is now at Camp Hale, Colorado, training with the Ski Troops.

"Through The Gull I have followed the doings of the Audubon members and more than once wished I was again part of the group. It is good to know that the war hasn't stopped the progress of the club, but rather seems to have promoted it.

"While at Harvard I had a number of interesting bird experiences. One of the most successful was on a cold February day when Jerry Sedgwick and I visited Newburyport and Plum Island. There in a snowstorm we got wonderful views of the Snowy Owl and Snow Buntings. In the harbor were great numbers of Old Squaw Ducks and Golden Eyes. We thought of the fun you would have photographing these beautiful birds. Another vivid day was seeing at close range American Eiders at Gloucester. Some of our best days were spent in the White Mountains and in the New Hampshire country. One spring morning Jerry and I watched the White-winged Crossbill sitting on an evergreen in the bright sunlight and pouring out his glorious song. We longed for a camera to catch his brick-pink head and breast against the snow-covered tree.

"It has been a happy year for me. I grew to love New England very much. My last civilian day was spent at oft-visited Walden Pond in Concord. Here over the recently freed water Bank Swallows dipped and the Phoebe circled out in shorter span. It was all as Thoreau has described it — the incredible blue water and the gentle New England woods, from which came the call of the Pewee.

"I have been in the army a month and a half now. Life at 9200 feet in the Rockies is quite an experience. The training of the Mountain or Ski Troops is rigorous but interesting. The country around is so lovely—not as glorious as the Sierra, but quite acceptable. As our valley is very dry and desert-like we have a strange bird life. Imagine seeing Robins and Blackbirds at this elevation in the Sierra! We have seen Red-tailed Sparrow, and Rough-legged Hawks, Horned Larks, Chickadees, Juncos, and many birds I have not had time to identify."

### Research Reports of the National Audubon Society

AFFILIATES OF THE National Audubon Society will welcome the appearance in print of the series of Research Reports sponsored by it. The first number, dealing with the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by James T. Tanner, was issued last October. The second, on the Roseate Spoonbill by Robert Porter Allen, came out in December. A third number, yet to appear, is to be written by Carl Koford on the California Condor. These books have historical significance as well as importance for the biology they record. The birds have restricted ranges, depleted numbers, and haunts so inaccessible that few bird students are likely to see them in the wild. Acquaintance with them then is likely to come only from reading these reports which have been prepared carefully and thoroughly, with excellent illustrations and after intensive field study under severe living conditions. Most of us will have to be satisfied with this kind of vicarious exploration. The two books provide source materials to be studied by anyone interested in the problem of saving rare animals. They show that solutions are complicated and not easily found. The Society offers the reports for \$2.50 each.

JEAN M. LINSDALE

### May Field Trip

THE REGULAR MAY field trip was held in the vicinity of Livermore a month later than our usual visit to that spot. The sixteenth proved to be that perfect day that all too rarely occurs upon such an occasion. Clear and windless, yet cool, the ideal weather was seized upon by a record gathering and resulted in a near-record bird list. For a while it was a question of whether the list of those attending or that of the species seen would top the other but the birds won out by coming through in their usual fine Livermore style.

A bus was used as a means of transportation and again proved its worth as the group moved smoothly as a unit through the program our leader, Mrs. Kelly, had outlined for the day.

Birding was remarkably good in view of the later date which removed the possibilities of several species that appear on our April lists in that area. The usual profitable stop at the McCoy ranch provided the group with the bulk of the birds seen, while an afternoon side-trip into Arroyo del Valle rounded our lists with several species not found in the Arroyo Mocho. Oddly enough one or two "sure" species went unobserved through the entire day. Prairie Falcon, Slender-billed Nuthatch and the Russet-backed Thrush were among these. However, their absence was excused in light of the other species seen. Phainopepla was represented most satisfactorily by a beautiful male bird, thus breaking our two-year famine of this species.

The singing of a Canyon Wren in Arroyo del Valle recalled pleasant memories to many of the group, and charmed as it always does, those hearing its song for the first time.

The usual assortment of associated wild-life was not overlooked and many observations aside from purely ornithological lines were made. Horned, fence, and alligator lizards were noted. Other creatures seen included a mud turtle and snakes of the gopher, garter, king, and yellow-bellied racer varieties. Two very young white-footed mice were found, apparently searching for a missing parent. One of "Bugs" Cain's scouts returned home with a large black-widow spider. Flowers, while not abundant, were present in wide variety.

Sixty-five species of birds were seen in the vicinity of Livermore:

Green Heron	Barn Swallow	Long-tailed Chat
Turkey Vulture	Cliff Swallow	Pileolated Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	California Jay	English Sparrow
Golden Eagle	Yellow-billed Magpie	Western Meadowlark
Sparrow Hawk	Crow	Red-wing
California Quail	Plain Titmouse	Bullock Oriole
Killdeer	Bush-tit	Brewer Blackbird
Mourning Dove	Wren-tit	Cowbird
Anna Hummingbird	House Wren	Western Tanager
Allen Hummingbird	Bewick Wren	Black-headed Grosbeak
Belted Kingfisher	Canyon Wren	Lazuli Bunting
Red-shafted Flicker	Mockingbird	House Finch
California Woodpecker	Robin	Willow Goldfinch
Lewis Woodpecker	Western Bluebird	Green-backed Goldfinch
Downy Woodpecker	Western Gnatcatcher	Lawrence Goldfinch
Nuttall Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing	Spotted Towhee
Western Kingbird	Phainopepla	Brown Towhee
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Loggerhead Shrike	Lark Sparrow
Black Phoebe	Solitary Vireo	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Wood Pewee	Warbling Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
Violet-green Swallow	Orange-crowned Warbler	Song Sparrow
Rough-winged Swallow	Yellow Warbler	

Fourteen additional species were noted en route: Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Mallard, Surf Scoter, Ring-necked Pheasant, Greater Yellow-legs, Sandpiper, Northern Phalarope, Western Gull, Bonaparte Gull, Burrowing Owl, Pine Siskin, Oregon Junco.

A grand total of 97 species was seen.

Thirty members were in attendance: Misses Elwonger, Fay, Jamieson, Kirk, MacIver, Papina, Peroni, Stern, Warford, and Young; Mesdames Austin, Bozant, Courtright, Kelly, Richardson, Sheldon, Smith, Kilham, and Meyer; Messrs. Bolander, Bradley, Brock, Bryant, Cain, Fischer, Leffler, Scott, Wolff, Kilham, and Meyer. Thirty-six guests brought our total attendance to sixty-six.

GORDON BOLANDER, *Historian*

## Audubon Notes

**JUNE MEETING:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, June 10th, at 8 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco. The speaker will be Dr. E. Raymond Hall, Associate Professor of Vertebrate Zoology, and Curator of Mammals, University of California. His subject will be "Current and Post-war Conservation of Native Mammals", illustrated by slides and skins.

**JUNE FIELD TRIP** will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to the vicinity of Manor, Marin County. Take bus "CA" at 8:50 a.m. at *Seventh and Mission*, San Francisco, arriving at Manor at 9:58. The trip will be led by Mrs. Courtright, and a visit will be made to Mr. Kinsey's aviaries.

**MAY MEETING:** The 308th meeting was held on Tuesday, the 18th, in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library, President Mrs. Harold C. Austin presiding.

Mr. John H. Baker, Executive Director of the National Audubon Society, used for his subject "Wild Life and War." Mr. Baker reviewed the value of Junior Clubs, Audubon Tours and Summer Camps. The two last-named activities are out for the duration. Through the National Audubon Society's merger with the School Nature League the Association hopes to extend the work of the League on a nationwide basis. Mr. Baker concluded by showing beautiful motion pictures of some of the spectacular birds living in the Florida Everglades and on the Prairies.

Mr. Bert Harwell briefly reviewed the events of the Regional Audubon Conference which was held in Los Angeles May 7, 8, and 9.

**TUNISIA** — Now that the Allies are in Tunisia it seems timely to add to our reference list the name of a book covering the birds of that region, "The Birds of Tunisia", J. I. S. Whitaker (R. H. Porter, London), 1905.—Junea W. Kelly.



## Observations

*Edited by* JUNE W. KELLY

The following observations have been reported:

Golden-crowned Sparrows, left El Sobrante, Contra Costa County end of April, Walter W. Bradley.

Golden-crowned Sparrows banded, April 28 and 29, San Anselmo, Mrs. Otis H. Smith.

15 American Egrets, Marin County Marsh near highway, May 18, Mrs. Mary Courtright.

1 Arizona Hooded Oriole, May 12, 13 — 3 birds May 16, East Oakland, Donald S. Brock.

Long-tailed Chat, May 9, Lake Merced, San Francisco, Gordon Bolander.

17 American Egrets, May 2, Marsh north of Sausalito; 12 Northern Phalaropes, May 4, East end of Bay Bridge; Amy Rinehart.

Bullock Oriole, May 4, Dimond Park, East Oakland; 3 Wandering Tattlers, Cliff House, May 6; Junea W. Kelly.

## Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

## For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mrs. Harold C. Austin.....	541 Boulevard Way, Piedmont
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Miss Ivander Maciver.....	2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
Editor.....	Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds.....	140 Estates Drive, Piedmont

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