

The local chapter of the Los Angeles Audubon Society (LAAS) was founded in 1910. Check out the first 30 years of LAAS history below.

This article was first published in the *Western Tanager*, Volume 50 Number 1 September 1983. – Glenn Cunningham

In May, 1907, a small circle of bird lovers began to take bird walks in the hills and canyons of Garvanza (now Highland Park). Interest grew and numbers increased, and on March 2, 1910, the group formed the organization that was to become the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

Mrs. Willis Dixon was elected its first president. Soon after, however, she passed away, and the first vice-president, Mrs. Myers, finished out the first term. Mrs. E.H. Hunter was then elected to serve the second term of two years.

For the first four years the Society was affiliated with the State organization, but separated in a 1914 meeting at the Hotel Clark to elect officers and selected Mrs. Robert Fargo as president. The first records surviving in the Society files date from that time, and the first entry reports a June 4, 1914, Audubon Field Day held in Laughlin Park. Regular reports of board meetings, general public meetings and field trips, that are still intact date from September, 1918, although newspaper clippings in the scrapbook record events as early as December, 1916. By then the Society was affiliated with both the State Federation of Women's Clubs and the National Association of Audubon Societies.

Over the succeeding years many changes have taken place in the organization, its size, character and functions. Even the name has changed. The first Recording Secretary (of the surviving minutes) consistently referred to the Los Angeles Audubon Club, although newspaper reports correctly referred to the Audubon Society. In the minutes of board meetings "Society" was first used in 1919. By 1922 the spelling 'Audibon' was introduced, persisting for a time, but since 1922 the spelling of Audubon has been monotonously consistent.

From the beginning, the Society annually elected officers, often re-electing some for two or more terms. Following Mrs. Fargo, Mrs. F.T. Bicknell served as president for eight years and at the conclusion of her last term was named President Emeritus. In addition to the usual slate, other officers, some elected, some appointed, included Official Speaker, Editor, Librarian, Custodian, Trail Leader, Auditor, District Federation Secretary, and Chairman of the following committees: Program, Press, Education, Birds and Wildlife, Wild Flowers, Trees, Butterflies, Extension, Publicity, Hospitality, Membership, and Western Tanager. Meeting places both for Board meetings and public programs, frequently changed with the evolvement of the Society.

Following its initial meeting at the Hotel Clark, the Board members met at various other downtown locations including: the Grosse Building, the old LA. Public Library, the 8th floor waiting room of the Broadway Department Store, and the LA District Federated Clubs Board Room in the new Jr. Orpheum Building, as well as in private homes of board members and on one occasion, the Edgewater Club in Santa Monica. Public program meetings were held at Exposition Park, for the first few years in the Art Museum, but from 1919 on in the State Building, from April, 1927, until 1934 meetings of the board were held in the "new and beautiful library" at Flower and Fifth Streets. When room there was no longer available, they moved to the branch library in Lafayette Park. Plummer House, in Plummer Park, first entered the picture in 1937. The park occupied parts of the former Plummer Ranch, originally, in turn, a small portion of the vast Rancho La Brea granted by the Mexican Government in 1826. Plummer Ranch had extended from Santa Monica Boulevard north to Sunset and from La Brea Avenue west to Gardner Street. With its orchards and vegetable gardens, dairy herd and vineyards of wine grapes it was considered typical of the times. The Plummer family house, known in later years as Pioneer Fiesta Center, attracted many visitors who enjoyed the famed hospitality.

Although Señor Eugene Plummer, last of the family to occupy the home, lived until 1943, he had over the years lost most of the land. When, in 1937, the last three acres were about to be foreclosed, they were bought by the County of Los Angeles and became Plummer Park which was soon expanded with additional acreage and the planned construction of several new buildings. The old house and garden, however, remained intact, and the house, reported to be the oldest in Hollywood, was designated a Historic Landmark by the California State Park Commission. Soon after acquiring the property, the County, through a letter from J.K. Reed, County Park Superintendent, to Mrs. Salmon, President of Los Angeles Audubon, offered the Society a room in the old house to be used as its headquarters.

On June 10, 1937, the Board held a special meeting in the park to consider the offer. Mrs. Scott of the Park staff showed the Board members through the home and the grounds and outlined future building plans and the possibility of Society participation. After luncheon "under the old pepper tree in the arbor" they retired to the president's home to discuss the proposal and to inspect the Society's collection of books, maps, charts and mounted birds, butterflies and wildflowers, assembled together for the first time.

The offered room was considered ideal for Society headquarters and for housing these possessions and it was voted to write a letter of acceptance to Mr. Reed asking that he set forth in writing any obligations to be

incurred. It was understood that there were none beyond furnishing and caring for the room. Immediately a House Committee was formed and a date set for members to visit and inspect the room. On July 1, 1937 thirty members "found all in beautiful order —maps, books and collections displayed in bookcases and showcases on the wall." On that occasion, Captain Plummer himself appeared, giving a talk on the original estate and its plantings. Mrs. Florence Lewis Clark, representing Superintendent Reed spoke for the Recreation Department "expressing the desire to cooperate in every way stating they would gladly see that the Society was moved into larger quarters as they found themselves outgrowing the present one, which seemed soon inevitable."

The first regular meeting was held in the new home on September 16, 1937. In preparation for its use, a new elective office of Curator was established, and contents of the room were insured for \$200 at a cost of \$3-86. With members taking turns as hostesses, the room was opened to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays. Contents of the room were enriched when Mrs. Fargo presented a framed picture of Captain Plummer and the Los Angeles County Museum donated over 50 specimens of mounted birds, largely those most familiar locally. When the predicted need for expansion arose, a second room was made available, and for a time, the Society offices and Nature Museum occupied the two front rooms of the house. But, with Park-sponsored ceramic classes meeting in the back or north half, the situation was far from ideal. In addition, museum exhibits were in open-fronted bookcases thus exposed to damage, and for each entry to the house a key had to be obtained from the Park office. Because of this inconvenience and lack of security the officers of the Society chose to keep their records at home.

However, due to the efforts of Marion Wilson, Curator and Headquarters Chairman, a gradual improvement followed as she succeeded in acquiring keys and eventually even a telephone. Various members of the Society donated their labor building proper shelves and bookcases. The Park building program continued, and on March 10, 1938, it was reported that the first load of lumber had arrived for the new Club House. "We were definitely to be included in the plans and were to have a room in the \$60,000 home," the notes concluded. A year later, the new building was completed; dedication occurring on December 5, 1938. The Society then had to make the choice of accepting space in it or remaining in the old Ranch House. But since the latter had become immeasurably more attractive with the addition of certain provisions, namely that the entire building and the surrounding garden would be turned over to the Society, and that a new roof and heating would be installed, it was accepted with little hesitation. Immediate improvements followed although the general appearance of the house and the floor plan remained much as they had been in Plummer's day. The Park

Department repaired and painted the two north rooms, removed unneeded plumbing, papered the walls and built a fence with a locked gate around the yard.

One improvement has still not materialized. In December 1938 the County Supervisors were asked for a cat-proof fence surrounding the garden, to which they agreed in September, 1939. We still wait.

Occupation of the entire house allowed separate rooms for the Sales Office and the Library, and contents were rearranged accordingly. Members continued to donate their services. The large exhibit cases were built by Howard Capwell and their backgrounds painted by another member and, artist, Vernon Mangold. Mrs. Brennan agreed to donate and install an air tight heater if fire ordinances allowed, and Mrs. Shearer arranged to have the chimney inspected. Mrs. Scott of the Park staff donated furniture for the house.

Finally, came full utilization of Plummer House, or Audubon House, as it came to be known. Officers and committee chairmen brought their files and records from home, and regular Board meetings, Western Tanager mailings and soon most Society activities were centered in this, the now official headquarters of the Los Angeles Audubon Society.

At the time Plummer House was accepted in preference to space in the new Park Building, it was decided to make reservations in the latter only for special gatherings such as the monthly program meetings which had been held in the State Building in Exposition Park since 1919. The first was held in the new Park Administration Building on November 29, 1939.

Monthly public programs covered a variety of topics, even as today, but with much heavier emphasis on trees, wildflowers, and butterflies. Recognized authorities on nature topics, non-authority travelers reporting on distant areas, and authors of new books in the field of nature entertained the audiences, which according to an entry in 1923 averaged sixty in number of attendants. Among the programs in the early years were the following that suggest the variety and the quality of the presentations, many by authors whose names are still familiar.

One of the earliest programs was that of J.C. Alpas speaking on the Birds of New Zealand. In May 1920, Theodore Payne pleaded for conservation of wild flowers. In November 1920, Mr. Leon Dawson of Santa

Barbara read from the manuscript of his new book, Birds of California. In April 1921, Dr. William A. Bryan, Director of the Museum of Science and Art, spoke on Birds of the Laysan Islands which he succeeded in having made a Bird Reservation. He was followed in May by Miss Kennedy from the library speaking on the need for a new library for Los Angeles. Mrs. Myers in October, 1921, gave a preview of her new book, Western Song Birds.

The March 1922, speaker was Mr. Edward C. Jaeger, author of the Mountain Trees of Southern California, whose topic was "Four Thousand Miles on a Donkey over Desert Trails." He closed with pleas to get away from the conventionalities of life and out into the desert and mountains to study the wonders of nature. Francis Fultz, author of "The Elfin Forest", spoke at the May, 1927, meeting on the work of reforestation in the schools. The marvels of modern technology were apparent when Mr. Alfred Cookman, speaker for the February, 1928 meeting "illustrated his talk with 75 lantern slides . . . especially remarkable as to detail due to his use of a lens which brought the image close to the camera from 200-400 yards distance thus enabling him to photograph them as if only a few feet away." Dr. Bull, Curator of the Junior Museum chose for his January 1930 subject, "Birds on Postage Stamps and Coins." In April 1935, Theodore Payne again appeared speaking on "The Preservation of Wild Flowers and the Native Landscape of California."

SMALL SCALE BEGINNINGS

As might be expected, the inauspicious beginnings of the Los Angeles Audubon Society were characterized by small scale activities and accomplishments. Sometimes too small: "On September 28, 1918, the first business or directors meeting of the Los Angeles Audobin (sic) Club for the year 1918-19 was called to be held at the Times Building, at 1 p.m. As only four members were present, not constituting a quorum, the meeting was postponed."

In December, 1918 the Chairman of the Membership Committee reported 12 life members, 1 honorary and 21 annual members, a total of 34, while the treasurer reported a balance of \$98.88. By 1919 membership had grown to 80 members, but the same year the Pasadena Society boasted 200 members. In 1925, although membership had grown to 102, the treasury balance had fallen to \$50.80.

Expenditures were not great, however, in 1926, for example, typical of the payments approved by the Society were \$1.00 for postage stamps and \$2.00 for the janitor at the State Building. Also in 1926 the Club was asked to contribute \$5.00 to the District Federation Office to maintain the office and to pay the stenographer. To meet

the obligation each member was assessed five cents.

But if expenditures were limited so was income. In May of 1935 members discussed raising the annual dues from \$1.00 to \$1.25 (plus 25¢ for the Tanager.) The motion was defeated.

FIELD TRIPS

Birding in the field was an important function of the LA Audubon Society from the earliest days.

The very first entry in the files of the Society, as stated above, reports that on June 4, 1914, an Audubon Field Day was held at Laughlin Park. From the park, the group walked to the Western Ave. entrance to Griffith Park. Twenty-four species were sighted and each bird and its actions described in detail in the report dated September 22, 1914 and signed by Carrie Fargo Bicknell.

The first officially sponsored LA. Audubon Society field trip reported in the records was that to Sunset Beach and Bolsa Chica on October 3, 1918. Nine participants, led by Mrs. Robert Fargo, reported a total of 50 species. The following month 20 people observed 38 species at Eagle Rock Park, and in December a trip to Old Stone Mill, El Molino, attended by 55, recorded 38 species. Individuals continued to make birding trips by car, especially during the summer. In December, 1918 Mrs. C. Hall, Historian and Recorder of Field Trips, reported on 18 trips during the summer to 14 locations. "The total of 135 land birds and 7 shore and water birds included many rare and unusual species."

Once they were initiated, Society field trips were held monthly, except during the summer, and more than 40 locations were visited. Most popular by far was Griffith Park with the groups assembling at the Western Avenue entrance (Fern Dell) or the Vermont Ave. entrance (Bird Sanctuary), or occasionally the Riverside Drive entrance and the old zoo site.

Shoreline excursions, as today, proved the most productive, especially Playa del Rey, Sunset Beach and Bolsa Chica, and Santa Monica Canyon and Beach. In March, 1935, a visit to Playa del Rey beach and mud flats provided 69 species, the record for those early years. Other areas that consistently produced more than 50 species were Sierra Madre Canyon and another site, no longer available, or even locatable, Sanford Bridge

and Slough near Santa Fe Springs.

Many other unfamiliar names, places that have disappeared or been altered beyond recognition, appear on the list of field trip sites, among them Laughlin Park, Hazards Park, and Selig Zoo, Eagle Rock Park, Woodland Park in Whittier, Verdugo Canyon, the Arthur Letts estate, Audubon Glenn, Mandeville Canyon Botanic Gardens, and Bixby Botanic Gardens in Santa Ana. Nor could the writer locate the Clyde Brown Studio on Pasadena Avenue in Arroyo Seco, the Kaust Art Gallery on Mulholland Hwy. or Miss Pratt's garden!

Close-to-town birding was, of course, easier before the intensive development of today. For example, for the field day in January, 1921, a group of 41 met at the Church of Angels in Garvanza for a walk around Johnson's Lake "then across the field and hills to Eagle Rock Park," a feat that would be neither possible nor productive to duplicate in today's world.

Ninety-five birders joined the trip to Sycamore Grove in June, 1921 and in the words of the recording secretary "every member was thoroughly enjoyed by all 33 species of birds seen."

An entry in June 1923 reports... "Since October, 1922, we have held nine field days with an average attendance of 50, and a total of 130 species of birds in the combined trips."

Not always did these early trips meet with success. In February, 1936, permission was requested of the President of the Gun Club in Playa del Rey to study water birds there. Permission was refused. And as today, weather frequently interfered. Rain on the February 1935 trip to Lincoln Park discouraged all but two birders, who were rewarded, however, by sighting 33 species. The all-time low was reached in February 1938 at Fern Dell with weather so bad that only one birder appeared and only one bird was sighted!

The first use of a bus for field trips was reported in October, 1927, when a Tanner Bus, costing \$22.50, was chartered for a trip to Cabrillo Beach. Participants were charged 75 cents for the trip and enjoyed birding the beach and walking on the breakwater to observe water birds.

Additional bus trips were later made to the Bolsa Chica Gun Club, Chatsworth Lake and to Modjeska Canyon accepting the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Tucker to visit their ranch home which later became the Dorothy May

Tucker Memorial Bird Sanctuary following her death on August 19, 1939.

Apparently the first pelagic trip was made in May, 1938, to the Coronado Islands with the Natural History Museum of San Diego.

BIRD SPECIES REPORTED

The reports of species claimed on these trips (for which the author will accept no responsibility) reveal two items of interest, the first records of "new" species, species now more commonly sighted with the growth in numbers of birders; and the occurrence of uncommon species in close-in areas that are now shunned by both bird and birders alike.

A fitting introduction to the topic is the March 21, 1919, talk by the President who announced "...the number of birds now known to science is 12,000: (!) 1,000 in America; 564 in California; 337 south of the Tehachapi."

Among those "south of the Tehachapi" were the following: In December, 1918, "Mrs. Fargo reported on our newest bird, the white-throated sparrow, a very rare and unusual bird for Los Angeles." Other reports over the years included, in January, 1919, a Whistling Swan at Silver Lake; In February, 1927, a Townsend's Solitaire at Griffith Park; in October, 1927, an American Egret (not to be confused with Common or Great Egrets —Ed.) and an Avocet in Westlake Park; and in March, 1928, a California Black Rail ("a new species here") and 21 Knots at Playa del Rey.

In October, 1927, it was reported in Whittier that "the Cardinal has come home to stay," and in March, 1934, many were seen in Whittier's Woodland Park.

In December, 1928, a Black-and-white Warbler was found in Echo Park, and in October, 1929, a Canyon Wren and two Roadrunners were seen "near an oil station on Ventura Boulevard."

In October, 1931, two new birds were added to the list: a Frigate bird in Malibu Mountains, and a Light-footed Rail at the Del Rey lagoon." In October, 1933 two White-tailed Kites appeared at Playa del Rey, and in November, 1935, the Los Angeles Times "reported seeing 16 Condors" but did not reveal the location.

In April, 1935, Mrs. Brennan was surprised by the visit of a Myna, and Mrs. Hall reported seeing 500 White Pelicans migrating near San Bernardino. In February, 1938, it was reported that 33 species had been sighted on the grounds of Audubon House in Plummer Park.

Undoubtedly the rarest find was made in Griffith Park in February, 1929, when birders discovered nothing less than a Whistling Crow!

Earlier reports utilize species names long since discarded or relegated to sub-species, among them the Dark-bodied Shearwater, Pigeon Hawk, Desert Sparrow Hawk, Water Ouzel, Gambel and Belding Song Sparrows, American Crow, Green-backed Goldfinch, Willow Goldfinch, Spurred Towhee, Parkman's House Wren, Lutescent Warbler, Anthony Towhee, California Partridge, Willow Warbler, Calaveras and Pileolated Warblers, Russet-backed Thrush, Blue-fronted Jay, Anthony Green Heron, and the Magillary Warbler.

BIRD CENSUS Bird Census

According to an item in the scrap book, dated February, 1928, the Christmas Bird Census was launched in 1901 by the Biological Survey of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That first year 25 regional reports were received. The Census, now under the supervision of the National Association of Audubon Societies, currently (1928) receives more than 175 reports, the results being reported in "Bird Lore".

The first Los Angeles area count was made on December 26, 1915, resulting in 131 species, the largest of any, putting Los Angeles in first place, ahead of Santa Barbara, the former leader. In 1916 the count was 106; in 1917, 108.

Although the second annual Census in December, 1916, produced only 106 species, it was still the nation's highest of the 163 areas reporting, ahead of second place Santa Barbara with 102 and third place St. Marks, Florida with 85. The areas covered, all to be "within 10 miles of the city limit" (?) included Los Angeles Harbor, Eagle Rock Valley, Silver Lake, Nigger Slough, Sunset Beach, Eaton Canyon, Benedict Canyon, San Fernando Valley and Hollenbeck Park.

Interest in an Annual Christmas Bird Count lagged thereafter. In December, 1918, a motion to have such a count was defeated. Again in November, 1922, but once more the motion lost because of the small district allowed.

During the next decade, however, another change of heart apparently occurred. The first suggestion came in December, 1926, with a motion to cooperate with the Southwest Museum Bird Study Club in taking a bird census.

At the November, 1928, meeting it was decided to hold the December meeting at Westlake Park (MacArthur Park), and to make it a Bird Christmas Festival as a tribute to the bird life of the Park. Members of the California Audubon Society and the Bird Lover's Club were invited to participate.

This became an annual event, and although statistics for most years are lacking, it was reported that in 1930, 31 species were counted. In 1931, 70 people identified 30 species. The 1932 Festival, with 45 present, netted 15 water birds and 13 land birds. In October of that year a letter was written to the Venice Gun Club requesting permission to enter their grounds for a Christmas Bird Census but there is no record of response or results.

The October, 1931, report included the fact that 176 species were sighted during the last year, and the January, 1934 report contained the entry "Los Angeles Audubon Society headed the list of State Bird Census with 156, 20 more than in 1933."

Beginning with 1932 the Christmas Festival was referred to as the Bird Census. It continued to be held at Westlake Park until 1937, when 78 members and 200 guests attended the first Christmas Festival at Plummer Park.

About this time the International Bird Census was introduced. Although no other details were included, it was reported that the first years count (1932 ?) was 122 species, and the second year, 156. By 1938, the event was apparently well established for in December plans for the Bird Census outlined the national rules for its conduct as follows:

1. Give time of start and also temperature.

2. Each car should have two and not more than four observers. One list from each car, signed by all observers and their addresses.
3. The estimate of mileage of the car and of the observers on foot should be taken, also length of time observing.
4. Hours should be six or longer. Time for observation —sunrise to sunset.
5. List each bird and total numbers of birds seen. If any unusual record, give brief statement of it.

SELECTION OF STATE BIRD

In November of 1927, President Emeritus Bicknell announced her plans for the selection of an official State Bird. The choice, she suggested, "should be (a bird) on a protected list, one of economic food habits, and one found. In April, 1935, Mrs. Brennan was surprised by the visit of a Myna, and Mrs. Hall reported seeing 500 White Pelicans migrating near San Bernardino. In February, 1938, it was reported that 33 species had been sighted on the grounds of Audubon House in Plummer Park. Undoubtedly the rarest find was made in Griffith Park in February, 1929, when birders discovered nothing less than a Whistling Crow! Earlier reports utilize species names long since discarded or relegated to sub-species, among them the Dark-bodied Shearwater, Pigeon Hawk, Desert Sparrow Hawk, Water Ouzel, Gambel and Belding Song Sparrows, American Crow, Green-backed Goldfinch, Willow Goldfinch, Spurred Towhee, Parkman's House Wren, Lutescent Warbler, Anthony Towhee, California Partridge, Willow Warbler, Calaveras and Pileolated Warblers, Russet-backed Thrush, Blue-fronted Jay, Anthony Green Heron, and the Magillary Warbler.

THE WESTERN TANAGER

In September 1934, it was proposed that the Society publish a monthly paper to be called the Western Tanager. Volume I —Number I, edited by Mrs. Raymond Brennan, appeared the following month with the introductory words, "conceived with the idea of stimulating interest in our feathered friends."

The Western Tanager, (free to members, 50¢ a year or 5¢ a copy to others) was an immediate success, not only locally but nation-wide. Copies of No. 1 were sent to the National and the Massachusetts Audubon Societies. The latter responded with copies of its publication thus inaugurating a flourishing exchange program that currently (1983) involves more than 60 Societies from all parts of North America.

Mrs. Brennan, assisted by an Editorial Board appointed in May 1935, continued to edit the Tanager for its first two years, followed by Mrs. Maud Murphy, who served for the next several years.

The California Audubon Society announced in October 1938, that it had received a generous legacy and wished to contribute \$5 a month toward the expense of publishing the Tanager, coupled with the request that, if agreeable, a page be devoted to their news items and that the Tanager be sent to all of their members at their expense. It was agreeable, and the Tanager circulation immediately increased from 160 to 260.

Circulation continued to grow to the extent that by February 1968 the first bulk mailing was required, and eventually to the present circulation of 3700 (1983).

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Current history, both local and national, including events of world importance as well as trivia, was often reflected in the actions, announcements and correspondence reported in the Society records.

On October 17, 1918, for example, the first indoor or program meeting of the LA. Audobon (sic) Club to be held at the State Museum in Exposition Park on October 17 had to be omitted, the health authorities of Los Angeles City having placed a ban on all public gatherings – forbidding such meetings to be held “on account of Spanish influenza, a contagious disease which was raging throughout the city and country at the time.” The ban, on indoor meetings only, continued through Nov. 1918.

In December of 1918, Mrs. Fargo, Chairman of the War Work Committee reported “one more star on the service flag,” and announced that the treasury had on hand \$60.00 for the War Fund. And Mrs. Bicknell, after leading the salute to the flag “gave expression of thanks that all cannot help but feel now that the Armistice is signed and influenza on the decline.”

One month later it was reported that still another star had been added to the service flag, and it was agreed that the coupon on the Liberty Bond should be cashed and added to the War Fund. Soon thereafter, the Society bought a \$50 Victory Bond.

Following the nation-wide sentiment, the Society signed the petition being circulated to all clubs – “Appeal of the Women of France to Women of all Countries.”

In November 1919 the Board went on record as favoring the League of Nations, but was opposed to Hiram Johnson's amendment.

A widespread epidemic again interfered with Society activities in April, 1924, when due to an area quarantine against Hoof and Mouth Disease, the field day location was changed from Sanford Bridge to Playa Del Rey.

Hoping to spread interest in the world of nature, the Society, in April, 1924, purchased copies of, “The Wild Flower Book, Western Birds and The Elfin Forest ” . . . to be given to the boys of the Merchant Marine.”

The report of September, 1929 included a description of “ . . . a silvery bird of huge proportions and strange outline – that imposing bird of the world – flight fame – the Graf Zeppelin.”

Of more local interest, in 1931, La Fiesta de Los Angeles, celebrating the 150th birthday of the city, was recognized when the members of the Board met in September with appropriate Spanish costumes and decorations.

And presaging important changes to come, at May, 1934 program meeting, Mr. Cox of the LA. Board of Power and Light showed motion pictures of the construction of Boulder Dam.

INTEREST IN TREES

Early in the Society's activities interest in trees was manifest, not only interest in protection of all trees, but in tree planting on special occasions or as memorials to selected individuals.

On April 13, 1918, a live oak in the sunken garden at Exposition Park was dedicated to “Bird Life of the Country”.

On Arbor Day in March, 1919, a Himalayan cedar “dedicated to the boys who served us in the Army” was

planted by the Society in Griffith Park (Western Avenue entrance?). In June 1920, the Society received a Memorial Certificate of Registration indicating that the tree had been recorded by the American Forestry Association.

Other tree planting over the years included a Deodar cedar placed near the west entrance to Griffith Park in June, 1920, and dedicated to the sons and grandsons of members who were in service in World War I; and, in May, 1921, a live oak in the Park picnic ground as a Memorial Tree for life and charter members Mrs. de Normand. A properly inscribed bronze tablet was given the park keeper to be placed on the tree.

Other prominent Society members were honored on Arbor Day, 1926, when four flowering trees, — two ceanthus and two Fremontias — planted in the Bird Sanctuary in Vermont Canyon, were named for Mrs. F.T. Bricknell, Mrs. Robert Fargo, Mrs. Harriet Myers, Mrs. George Schneider. In April, 1927, a live oak was planted in the Sanctuary in honor of Mrs. C.H. Hall, Society Chairman of Birds and Wildlife.

In February, 1932, a magnolia tree was planted in Lincoln Park in memory of George Washington on the bicentennial of his birth.

Further interest in trees is suggested by the report that four trees had been entered in the Tree Hall of Fame on the American Forestry Association in Washington, D.C. in the name of the Los Angeles Audubon Society. These included the Cathedral Oak in Lincoln Park under which the Portola Expedition held Easter services; the Verdugo Oak, under which papers were signed between Fremont and Pio Pico; the largest rubber tree in California at 20th and Compton Street; and the largest known camphor tree in the yard of the Pomona Women's Club.

In October, 1930, the Society wrote the Los Angeles Council favoring the planting of shade trees on city streets. In October, 1934, the group favored the oak as the National Tree. At the December, 1938, meeting it was announced that a nursery on Commonwealth Avenue was to furnish labels for the trees of Plummer Park, but the minutes reveal no follow up.

It is not surprising that particular interest was shown in saving the California redwoods, and considerable effort was directed toward that goal.

Mrs. Josephine Clifford McCracken was made honorary member of the Society in April, 1918, since she was the first to start the movement of saving the redwoods, efforts which resulted in the establishment of government Forest Reserves and Parks. In September, 1921, members voted to join the American Forestry Association and Save the Redwoods League, approving the \$2.00 annual dues for the latter. In February of the following year the Corresponding Secretary was instructed to write the appropriate Congressmen and Senators requesting passage of House Bill 7452 as amended by Mr. Barber protecting the rights of the public against seizure of water in the Roosevelt-Sequoia National Park for commercial purposes.

Following the Federated Clubs of California's request for contributions to the Club's grove of redwoods, Los Angeles Audubon, in February, 1925, pledged \$100 for the Memorial Redwood Grove. On September 12, 1935, it was reported that the Redwood had been selected as the State Tree, another project that the Society had long favored. In February, 1939, the Society supported the purchase of Redwood Mountain Grove of Big Trees and the transfer of King's River Canyon to the National Park Service.

INTEREST IN BIRDS

Appropriately, the dominant interest of the Society continued to be birds — their observation, study, and protection, and the arousing of such interest in others. With this in mind, Mrs. G. Schneider, Official Speaker of the Society, was placed on the list of P.T.A. speakers in 1918, giving her a wide audience in which to spread the word. The city library was persuaded to buy bird books and to provide bird talks and exhibits. And in the same year, Mr. Hall was appointed to see about keeping the bird baths in Exposition Park clean.

In 1921 subscriptions were made to the John Burroughs Memorial Fund and the Junior Audubon Society, and a Western Bird Guide was given to the McKinley Home for Boys. The experiment of the Boy Scouts in their Bird House Building Contest was sanctioned in 1924.

Activities in 1930 included the approval of the erection of a monument to Audubon in Louisiana. The following year, the Society sent \$10.00 to the fund to save the old home of Audubon from destruction. Plans entailed moving the house to park land on Riverside Drive by the Hudson River, but the project proved unfeasible and the donation was later returned.

In 1933 members volunteered to make a bird list for the Botanic Gardens at Huntington Library, a list which eventually included 124 species. On April 12, 1934, it was announced that Governor Rolf had declared April 13 State Bird Day.

PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE

Consistent with the above interest was the Society's role in supporting the creation of bird and wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife preserves, both large and small. Many of these are well established today. Others were short-lived or failed to materialize altogether.

Leading off in these activities, at the May, 1919, Field Day, Audubon Glen was dedicated to the Society as a sanctuary, an accomplishment which inspired the members to close the meeting with the singing of America.

Early in 1920 the Society endeavored to have all City Parks declared bird sanctuaries. After inquiries, the Chairman of the Bird Sanctuary Committee was able to report in April that the Society was at liberty to dedicate any or all City Parks as sanctuaries whenever it chose to do so.

In May a petition was read and approved to save part of Yellowstone National Park for a bird sanctuary. On June 3, 1920, a bronze tablet was placed on a large live oak in east Griffith Park dedicating the area a "Bird Sanctuary," and in November, 1923, Mrs. Schneider was empowered to carry on work in the development of Vermont Canyon in similar fashion.

Two projects commanded the Society's attention in 1924. It was resolved that the State should re-establish Lower Klamath Lake (which had been recently drained) as breeding grounds for water fowl; and the Mayor of San Diego was urged to set aside Mission Bay as a Sanctuary.

Many similar resolutions, requests and petitions followed. In June, 1928, the Society passed a resolution that the Mandeville Canyon Botanic Gardens be made a Wild Bird Sanctuary, a move that was later adopted by unanimous vote of the Executive Board of the Gardens.

Among other activities:

October, 1928. Petitioned the Los Angeles District C.F.W.C. for creation of a State Park embracing the marshes of Playa del Rey.

December, 1928. Went on record as favoring establishment of Mt. Fraser as a Wild Bird Sanctuary.

September, 1930. Endorsed purchase of 320 acres of the Sepulveda Estate near San Pedro for a Royal Palm Park.

October, 1930. Announced the dedication of The Pines at Fraser Mountain Park as a Wild Life Sanctuary.

November, 1930. Attended a conference with Los Angeles Mayor Porter regarding the establishment of a Bird Sanctuary at Eagle Rock Park.

January, 1932. Upon hearing that Mandeville Canyon had been accepted by the County as a Botanical Garden, wrote expressing the hope that the Bird Sanctuary established there in 1928 would be maintained.

February, 1932. Wrote Congressmen to support Bill 12381 establishing Everglades National Park.

January, 1933. Petitioned U.C.L.A. Regents to set aside the campus as a bird sanctuary.

In 1934 reported that Hancock Park had been made a Bird Sanctuary.

May, 1935. Favored making Playa del Rey lagoon a bird preserve since real estate developers were threatening to drain it.

March, 1936. Supported the Harbor City Chamber of Commerce endeavor to have Bixby Slough declared a Bird Sanctuary.

December, 1937. The president reported on a meeting she had attended in regard to the conservation and

preservation of Nigger Slough for a County Park and Bird Sanctuary.

December, 1937. Reported that Plummer Park had been made a Bird Sanctuary and considered installation of a bird bath and Audubon sign by the County.

January, 1938. Reported that the Chief Engineer of the Flood Control District had recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the sloughs be maintained as aquatic parks.

April, 1938. Reported on a letter sent by Leo Carillo to the California and Los Angeles Audubon Societies stating that his 2000 acre ranch had been made a State Game and Bird Refuge posted by the State and by himself, on which he had established watering places and feeding spaces.

May, 1938. Reported that the Society had played a part in helping to acquire Laguna Dominguez as a Bird Refuge, saving it from becoming a manufacturing district.

October, 1938. Reported on the progress toward making Bixby and Nigger Sloughs into a Bird Refuge, but had to add that developments were not encouraging.

December, 1938. Donated to the fund providing feed for the birds and animals in the recently burned over area of the Santa Monica Mountains.

February, 1939. Agreed that the Society should contribute \$5.00 this year and pledge \$5.00 a year for the next two, to a three year study of the California Condor by the National Association.

Good news was forthcoming in October, 1939, when it was announced that Buena Vista Lagoon had been made a Bird Sanctuary, and that Woodland Park in Whittier was soon to be so dedicated. The latter materialized the following month. On November 6, 1939, the Whittier News reported that a wildlife refuge had been established in the San Gabriel River area between Whittier and El Monte adjoining Whittier's Woodland Park. The 26 acres owned by the Cate Ditch Company, plus several miles of river bottom, formed the nucleus of the refuge, to which Mr. Pelissier, of the Pellissier Dairy Company, added the 300 acres of his ranch. The Refuge was to be administered by the Los Angeles Audubon and affiliated societies.

But interest in wildlife conservation was not confined to the establishment of reserves. All legislation affecting the welfare of living things commanded the attention of the Society, as did cases of neglect or abuse, whether of entire species or single individuals.

Among the earlier instances of the latter, in April, 1919, members heard a complaint that "woodpeckers were being killed in certain parts of the city." They immediately voted that Miss Pratt, Deputy Game Warden, should investigate and take up the matter of defending the birds. On May 19 she reported that Mr. Cornell of the Fish and Game Commission stated that no permission had been given by him or the Telephone Company to kill woodpeckers.

There was seldom a dull period in this area as evidenced by the following actions of the Society.

February, 1921. Drafted a petition asking that no one under the age of 16 be granted a hunting license, and approved action asking that a one dollar tariff be placed on all birds imported into the country.

1924. Resolved to work for State law making it illegal to pick or destroy wild flowers within 25 feet of highways.

April, 1924. Protested, and requested measures against the International Crow Shooting Contest to be sponsored for the following three months by DuPont.

November, 1925. Protested to Fish and Game over the removal of the Cormorant and the White Pelican from the protected list.

September, 1927. Discussed the "war on birds" in the Lindsay area where two cents was being paid for each bird and one cent for each egg.

March, 1930. Approved the Bald Eagle Protection Act.

April, 1931. Sent the following telegram to President Hoover: "Heartily approve your protection for wild geese and migratory birds."

October, 1931. The Society was assured that the current vogue of colored chicken feathers on women's hats meant no danger of a return to the use of egret feathers.

Reported a protest against so many cats being dumped in Sierra Madre Canyon.

November, 1931. Reported that a grosbeak, a Mountain Bluebird, and a redbird were for sale in a pet shop.

December, 1931. Upon hearing that permission was being sought to shoot seagulls on Los Angeles reservoirs, wrote Police Chief Steckel asking that he give careful thought and consideration before acting. The answer stated that he had given permission for such shooting for 90 days but that the safety of citizens would be taken care of. (!)

May, 1932. Passed a resolution protesting the poisoning of animals with thaleum (thallium?).

March, 1933. Passed a resolution requesting the State Legislature to extend the boundary of the Fish and Game District No. 19 A to a line between Pt. Dume on the north and Rocky Point on the south.

April, 1933. Reported that "feather trim is much favored in fashion this season," and that two caged cardinals had been on display at the Bel Air Flower Show, and further, that collectors, authorized by Fish and Game, were thinning out desert birds, especially the Vermillion Flycatcher.

April 1936. Discussed advocating the belling of cats.

September, 1936. Sent a telegram to President Roosevelt imploring the closing of the duck season for the year because of the effect of the drought on the crop of young ducks. In December heard the report that the duck hunting season had been cut by 15 days, and furthermore that in spite of protests by hunters the Federal Government was standing behind the law prohibiting "baiting."

Perhaps the ultimate in horror stories was revealed in March, 1938, when it was reported that Mr. Bruder had cooperated with the Society in apprehending a woman who had been feeding live birds to her cat on the advice

of her veterinarian.

Ending the decade on a happier note, in May, 1939, a letter from the Isaac Walton League announced that they would drop all proceedings to have White Pelicans exterminated on Lake Elsinore.

PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Concern about the environment is nothing new. Many of the items that attracted the Society's attention in early years are reminiscent of today's headlines, as the following attest.

May, 1920. Began a campaign to prevent the construction of irrigation reservoirs in Yellowstone National Park.

In February, 1922, members wrote Congress requesting the passage of House Bill 7452 protecting public rights against the seizure of water in the Roosevelt-Sequoia National Park for commercial purposes.

In May, 1927, there was the first mention of the threat of poison spray in the orchards affecting bird life.

October, 1930. Sent a letter disapproving the widening of Sturdevant Trail (Santa Anita Canyon) to an auto road.

January, 1932. Protested to the City Planning Commission over granting permission to drill for oil in the Los Angeles River.

October, 1932. Urged members to vote No on Proposition 11 permitting oil drilling along the coast.

April, 1933. Wrote the City Council disapproving the plan to put a street (Wilshire Boulevard) through Westlake Park. (MacArthur Park.)

Illustrating the unhappy effect of environmental change on wildlife, in April, 1933, it was reported that the clearing of willows and underbrush in Griffith Park, and the diminished water supply, had reduced the park bird list from 137 to 111, a loss of 26.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

Finally we note a few miscellaneous items that fit in none of the topics discussed above, but that suggest the interests and thoughts and actions of Society members in past year.

In January, 1922, the Board voted the "the March Field Day in each year hereafter be known as Founder's Day, and that our April meeting this year be recognized as John Burroughs Memorial Day."

December, 1922. Adopted the Mariposa lily as the Society Flower.

December, 1922. Moved that Mrs. Bicknell complete the Los Angeles Society history and plan to have it published. (What happened?)

June, 1924. Attended the house warming at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Stephen McGroarty (soon thereafter destroyed by fire.)

October, 1924. Agreed to open each meeting with the singing of America the Beautiful.

May, 1926. Announced that the living symbols of Society emblems were: Bird • Western Tanager; Flower – Mariposa Lily; Tree – living (sic) oak.

December, 1926. Thanked Mrs. Leonard Hall for her efforts in selecting the Society's seal.

November, 1927. Announced that the following were complimentary members of the Society: the Los Angeles Library, the Hollywood Branch of the Library, Roland Ross, Alfred Cookman, Dr. L.H. Miller, Mary Mann Miller, Augusta Possens and Martha McCann of the Botanic Gardens.

September, 1929. Passed a motion that "we do not subscribe to The Auk, but that we sanction and join the National Park Association."

October, 1932, Reduced the annual dues from \$1.50 to \$1.00.

April, 1933- Voted to select a butterfly emblem for the Society, and in May adopted the Swallow-tail Butterfly.

May, 1933. Wrote John McGroarty congratulating him on being chosen Poet Laureate of California.

December, 1934. Received a new book, Roger Tory Peterson's guide, enabling quick identification of birds, and agreed to purchase a copy.

March, 1934. Mrs. Veatch was asked to write the history of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, and in May the Post Record (?) requested such a history in story form. (Again what happened?)

May, 1934. Gave the bird nest collection to the University of Southern California and later received a letter of thanks from President Von Kleinsmit who reported it had been placed in the Science Building.

On June 3, 1935, the group met at the home of one of the members to celebrate the 25th birthday of the Society.

A letter to Joan Crawford, dated August 19, 1936, congratulated her on turning her Brentwood Heights home into a bird sanctuary with water and bird houses provided. She responded on August 29 thanking the Society for the letter and congratulating it in its work.

In February, 1938, Mrs. Duff presented the President with a gavel made from wood from a tree on Abraham Lincoln's farm.

With relief we note that on April 14, 1938, "the President reported that Mrs. Fargo had found her binoculars which had been missing."

As early as 1919 the Society had placed a bird fountain in Exposition Park, but in 1926 received a letter from the Department of Parks reporting the "end" of the fountain, a victim of vandalism and disintegration.

But in December, 1938, a new cement bird bath was acquired through the generosity of Mrs. John E. Bishop of the Ambassador Hotel, a gift in the name of her canary, Micky. With considerable fanfare it was dedicated at Plummer Park on January 27, 1939, and accepted by Mrs. Florence Lewis Scott, Director of Plummer Park, Mr. O.M. Schultz, President of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, Mrs. Harriet William Myers, President of the California Audubon Society, and Captain E.R. Plummer.

Micky had achieved some fame as a result of being the only bird with membership in the Audubon Society, the only one with his own bank account, as well as one that had founded a Canary Club, appeared on radio, and that regularly received fan mail.

On May, 1939, it was voted "that we have a listing in the Los Angeles Telephone Directory," and thus did the Society announce to the world that it had reached maturity at the end of the first thirty years.