

THE WREN-TIT

Bulletin of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

Vol. 1

San Jose, California, October, 1929

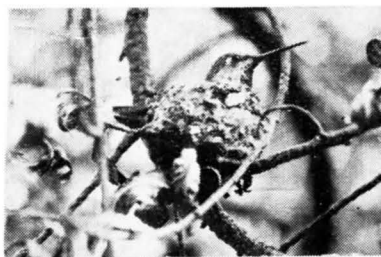
No. 4

Feeding Visits and Other Reactions of the Nesting Anna Hummingbird

Compared to the method employed by the majority of birds the habit of the hummingbird in thrusting the bill nearly or quite to the stomach of the nestling during the violent regurgitation employed in its feeding makes a strikingly forceful impression. The Anna Hummingbird accompanies its behavior too with a marked indifference to the human that makes observation of this astonishing performance a possibility with each nest found. A nest located June 1, 1929, by Miss Barbara Norris on a dead willow branch about five feet above the water of Penetencia Creek in Alum Rock Canyon was made the subject of several periods of study during which photographs were taken and feeding visits timed.

The reactions of this individual exhibited a true lack of fear of the human and not the apparent fearlessness attributed to many birds that merely flush with reluctance or return to incubate or brood because of nest-attachment and in spite of their agitation caused by an intruder's presence. The Anna Hummingbird was never agitated, never seemed to protest my gauche intrusion and, though she came to the nest through the same urge that prompts all nesting birds, she did so with very little reluctance. Thus the first photograph was taken of her without flushing her though the

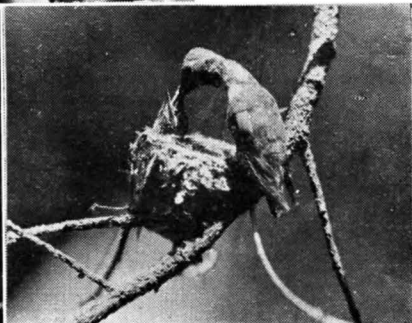
Anna Humming-
bird Brooding
(right).



On nest edge just
prior to feeding
(below).



Regurgitating
food into throat
of nestling
(below).



camera lens was introduced within three feet as she brooded. Later she fed the single nestling and sat on the edge of the nest for a picture with the lens within three feet and the photographer within eight and, on the following day, fed while I stood over and manipulated a Graflex within four feet and in full view. Her hesitation to approach this juggernaut combination by her nest-side was less than that ever observed for any other bird.

The female (the male was never observed), comes into the nest with the "click, click" notes of the hummingbird, alights on the edge of the nest and remains quiet for a moment of some several seconds. She then stretches up her neck, pulls her beak tip back against her breast and sends it down with vehemence into the gaping throat of the nestling. Down it goes until nearly the full length has disappeared into the gullet of the young. The mother then withdraws it slowly the while her entire body goes through the violent peristaltic contortions of regurgitation. This is most apparent in the curiously elongated neck where waves of motion are noticeable. The beak is entirely withdrawn, a pause intervenes, and then down it goes again. This performance may be repeated as much as six times at a single nest-visit. It reminds one much of the procedure that would be necessary to inoculate repeatedly with a hypodermic needle.

As with all birds that use a similar method of young-feeding, the nest visits are comparatively widely spaced. Between 2:12 P. M. and 4:26 P. M. on June 10 there were six feedings. These averaged thus a trifle over twenty-two minutes in interval with the longest period at thirty-eight minutes and the shortest at fifteen. On June 11 between 11:00 A. M. and 2:29 P. M. there were eight feeding visits giving an average of twenty-six plus minutes with the longest interval at forty-five and the shortest at fifteen minutes. Between feedings the bird was entirely out of the vicinity so that, though a camera was by the nest-site during most of these periods, it did not interfere greatly with their regularity. Compared to the very frequent feedings of a pair of nearby Western House Wrens these of the Hummingbird were very few.

GAYLE PICKWELL.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR A "STATE BIRD"

If one can attach a patriotic or political significance to any attempt to inform the public and especially children concerning birds then such attempts are certain to arouse a greater and wider interest than with any other known method.

Apparently with this in mind the campaign for a state bird for California was inaugurated some two years ago. Mrs. F. T. Bicknell, representing the California Audubon Society with headquarters at Los Angeles, was the instigator of the move it seems and has since acted as Chairman of the State Bird Committee for her organization. The Cooper Club has co-operated and the Audubon Association of the Pacific, with headquarters at San Francisco, appointed Mr. C. A. Harwell to act as its Chairman of the State Bird Committee for that group. Through the efforts of these organizations, with Mr. Harwell broadcasting weekly bird talks over KGO during the winter and spring of 1928-29, with many volunteer workers visiting schools throughout the state, a formidable list of votes for a state bird has been accumulated. With these votes to back them the State Bird Committees plan to have formulated and to present to the state legislature a bill which, when passed by that body, will make official the majority choice of the voters as thus known.

The Cooper Club proposed the following candidates: Anna Hummingbird, Audubon Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Bluebird, California Brown Towhee, Bullock Oriole, Bush-tit, California Condor, California Gull, California Thrasher, California Valley Quail, California Woodpecker, Dotted Canyon Wren, Green-backed Goldfinch, California Purple Finch, Red-shafted Flicker, Roadrunner, Russett-backed Thrush, Desert Sparrow Hawk, Water Ouzel, Western Tanager, Wren-tit, Western Kingbird. Harriet Williams Myers of the California Audubon Society has written a little brochure letting each of these candidates describe his own fitness to be state bird.

In a letter to Miss Emily Smith of October 28, 1929, Mr. Harwell states that the campaign closes December 31, 1929, and that the Valley Quail was

leader at the date of his writing with nearly half of the 100,000 votes cast. The Western Bluebird followed as second and the Bullock Oriole third. As yet no bill has been formulated to be presented to the legislature at its forthcoming session but Mr. Harwell intimates that such a bill will be presented. In any case there can be no doubt but that the vigor of the campaign has done much to make California citizens bird-conscious. Such an awakening is the prelude to every step directed toward making these citizens also bird-lovers and bird conservers.

THE CALENDAR

The November Meeting of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society will be held Monday evening, November 18, at 7:30 o'clock in the San Jose State Teachers College, Room 39.

Mr. C. A. Bryant of San Francisco will be the speaker. He has as his subject, "Some Birds of the Tidelands and Deserts of Southern California."

REPORTS OF PAST MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society resumed its monthly meetings, after the summer intermission, on September 30. This meeting, held in Room 37 of the State Teachers College at San Jose, had for its major purpose the election of officers, but following the business meeting, an enjoyable informal presentation of general observations was given by members and guests.

Miss Emily Smith presented, as the major speaker of the meeting of Oct. 21, her extensive observations of the Texas Nighthawks that nest on the gravel of the Coyote Creek bed some ten miles south of San Jose. By persistent and frequent visits Miss Smith secured such important information as the exact incubation period, the extent, and amount of feedings by each sex (several evenings, early mornings and one entire night were spent at the nesting sites), notes and reactions of male, female and young of three nestings. Lantern slides of incubating, brooding and defending female and of young at various ages were used to illustrate her presentation.

The Society made two field trips in October. The first of these, on October 5, 1929, was to Dumbarton Bridge, especially the east approaches of this structure, and back to the salt marshes at Warm Springs, then to Milpitas and east to the Piedmont Road, south on the latter to Alum Rock canyon. The day was very warm, quiet and hazy. High spots of the day were several, two worthy of especial mention being: hundreds of Eared Grebes in the open water near Dumbarton Bridge proper; great numbers of Pipits feeding in the road and, with the Least and Western Sandpipers, along the margins of the evaporating basins by the bridge approach. The list: Eared Grebe, White Pelican, Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, Shoveller, American Scoter, Turkey Vulture, Western Red-tailed and Desert Sparrow Hawks, California Quail, Killdeer, Greater Yellow-legs, Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Northern Phalarope, California Ringed-billed and Bonaparte Gulls, Least Tern, Barn and Burrowing Owls, Anna Hummingbird, Nuttall Woodpecker, Red-shafted Flicker, Black and Say Phoebes, California Horned Lark, Steller Jay, Plain Titmouse, Bushtit, Slender-billed Nuthatch, Dotted Canyon Wren, Western Mockingbird, Western Robin, American Pipit, California Shrike, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brewer Blackbird, California Linnet, Willow Goldfinch, Green-backed Goldfinch, Brown Towhee, Savannah (Bryant?), Western Lark, Puget Sound White-crowned and Song (Salt Marsh?) Sparrows, 48 species.

The second October trip, taken on the 26th, was very extensive including the Sierra Grade and Sierra Road through Los Buellis Hills that separate Santa Clara and Calveras Valleys, east through Santa Clara Valley to the Alviso salt marshes at the foot of San Francisco Bay and back to San Jose via North First Street Road. The day began with a heavy and low fog

THE WREN-TIT

which was left below by climbing the Hills and, though it had disappeared upon our return to the Valley and the marshes, the day was densely hazy throughout and cool. A day of bird thrills, two of which included: a flock of not less than two-hundred Band-tailed Pigeons that, spread out in a thin line hundreds of yards long and at right angles to the line of flight, flew with purposeful wingbeat southward as we, above Calveras' waters, gaped at them in thrilled astonishment; thousand of sandpipers on the mud flats at Alviso that allowed close-approach but were ever burring up in flocks hundreds strong to wheel and pirouette, now glinting white, now disappearing as the low western sun shone over them. The list: Turkey Vulture, White-tailed Kited; Western Red-tailed, Ferruginous Rough-legged, Marsh and Desert Sparrow Hawks, California Clapper Rail, Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer, Greater Yellow-legs, Least Sandpiper, Red-backed Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, California Gull, Band-tailed Pigeon, Nuttall and Lewis Woodpeckers, Red-shafted Flicker, Say and Black Phoebe, California Horned Lark, Stellar and California Jays, Western Crow, Plain Titmouse, Chesnut-backed Chickadee, Slender-billed Nuthatch, Wren-tit, Northern Rock and Bewick Wrens, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Pipit, California Shrike, Hutton Vireo, Audubon Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brewer Blackbird, California Linnet, Willow and Green-backed Goldfinches, Brown Towhee, Oregon Junco, Western Savannah, Western Lark, Fox, Gambel White-crowned, Puget Sound White-crowned. Song (Santa Cruz?) and Vesper Sparrows; 50 species and subspecies.

SOME SEASONAL NOTES

In our first issue (Wren-tit, V. 1, No. 1, January, 1929) a record was made of Barn and Cliff Swallows nesting, in 1928, in an old boathouse mired in the salt marshes at Warm Springs. The number of birds occupying this structure in 1929 was even greater. On May 11, 1929, there were twelve Barn Swallow nests with eggs, two in construction, one with young. Two old Barn Swallow nests contained young of the California Linnet. A total of sixty-one Cliff Swallows nests built or in construction lined the eaves and porch.

The Society does not have very exacting records of dates of first arrivals of this fall of 1929 but the following may be of interest: Emily Smith records, at Los Gatos, the first Golden-Crowned Sparrow on September 25; first Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Varied Thrush on October 11; first Cedar Waxwing on October 13; first Red-breasted Sapsucker on October 30; Gladys Record reports the first Hermit Thrush October 12 at Los Gatos; Gayle Pickwell, at San Jose, records Puget Sound and Gambel White-crowned Sparrows in song September 25. The first Audubon Warbler was seen, on the campus of the State Teachers College at San Jose, by Emily Smith and Paul Walker, October 11. First Robins, Say Phoebe, and other transient and winter visitants are listed in the field trip record of October 5.

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

President.....Dr. Gayle B. Pickwell, State Teachers College, San Jose, Cal.
Secretary.....Miss Emily Smith, Route 1, Box 93, Los Gatos, Cal.
Treasurer.....Miss Henrietta E. Rielsam, 59 So. 11th St., San Jose, Cal.

THE WREN-TIT published quarterly in January, April, July, and October.

Editor, Dr. Gayle B. Pickwell

Subscription to Bulletin alone, 20c per year.

Membership dues payable September 1.

Active Membership \$1 per year. Contributing Membership \$5 per year.
Sustaining Membership \$10 per year. Life Membership \$25, payable at one time.