

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

October, 1947

Last month you received a circular announcing the Audubon Screen Tours, which our Society and San Jose State College are co-sponsoring. The first of this series of motion picture lectures will be given Thursday evening of next week, October 23. It will be held at 8 o'clock in the Montgomery Theatre in the San Jose Civic Auditorium, at the corner of San Carlos and Market Streets. Mr. Alexander Sprunt, Jr., will be the lecturer and will show his motion picture "Our Living World." (In case you have misplaced the circular which describes these Screen Tours, another is enclosed. Or perhaps you know of some one to pass it on to.)

Because of the Screen Tour lecture scheduled for this month there will be no regular October meeting of the Society. The Screen Tours Committee reports the season tickets are selling fast and urges members not to delay getting their tickets for this very fine series of wildlife lectures.

The October field trip will be taken this coming Sunday, October 19, to Mt. Madonna Park near Hecker Pass, by way of Almaden Rd. and Uvas Rd. Miss Elsie Hoeck will be the leader and will go directly to the Park (entering by main road from summit of Hecker Pass), so that as much time as possible can be spent there. Meet in San Jose at the corner of E. San Carlos and 5th Streets at 8 a.m. Bring a lunch.

Annual dues for the year 1947-1948 are now payable to the treasurer, Mrs. Eva McRae, 55 Manning St., San Jose 12.

Active Membership Dues ----- \$1.50 annually
Contributing Membership Dues -- 5.00 annually
Life Membership ---- 35.00 payable at one time

According to our By-laws, membership in the Society terminates automatically after dues are delinquent one year.

Ralph A. Smith, Pres. - phone Campbell 3997
Emily Smith, Corr. Sec. - Los Gatos 994-W

SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS

The summer resident birds, which came last spring to nest in Santa Clara Valley, have flown south for the winter, most of them far south of California. They were so quiet after the nesting season that their departure in August and September was hardly noticed. I find almost no records in my notebook of late-lingering summer residents. September 13 an olive-sided flycatcher, entirely voiceless, was flycatching in the hills near Los Gatos, and October 5 a lone chipping sparrow was feeding on my lawn. That same day I saw a western tanager in my fig tree.

Fortunately many birds in Santa Clara Valley do not have the instinct to migrate after raising their nestlings. These all-year-round residents are looking very trim after their late summer molt. Some of them in my neighborhood are singing again; in fact the pair of wren-tits which have made my garden their home never really stopped singing. But the ornithologists say most birds do not sing during the molting period. The post-molt singing which I have noticed has been brief and the songs usually incomplete. This has been especially true of the song sparrow, Bewick wren, California thrasher, and mockingbird. Other resident birds I have heard singing a little during the last month or two are Hutton vireo, Arkansas goldfinch (we used to say green-backed goldfinch), house and purple finches, black phoebe, western meadowlark, and loggerhead shrike.

Our bird population just now is being very rapidly augmented by winter visitant birds. Great numbers of birds which nested farther north are trooping into Santa Clara Valley. Some of them are on their way to wintering grounds farther south, but many will stop to winter here. The first winter visitant I noted in my locality was the red-breasted nuthatch, August 30. This charming nuthatch is quite vagrant in its migrating tendencies. Some years it apparently skips Santa Clara Valley; but this year it has come early and in unusual numbers. Since August 30 I have heard it "blowing its elfin horn" near my home at least a dozen times; also I have heard it in Alum Rock Park, in the eucalyptus grove where the egrets nest (between north San Jose and Alviso), and at several places in the Santa Cruz Mts. Dr. Matt Vessel has been hearing it at his new home on 16th St., in San Jose, near the Coyote Cr. A true vagrant for this region, a pomarine jaeger, was seen September 19 by Dr. Ralph Smith and myself. This sea rover was inland, chasing gulls in the marshes east of Alviso. Another vagrant, the Clark nutcracker, was seen September 21 by Frances Dieterich, near the top of the mountain just south of Los Gatos. It was "feeding hungrily in a pine tree, as close as three feet from the car window."

Of the regular winter visitant birds, the cedar waxwing was the first I detected -- and it was the last to leave for the north last spring! A dozen of these beautifully groomed birds visited my fig tree September 8. Since then waxwings have been frequently heard or seen hereabouts in slowly increasing numbers. My first white-crowned sparrow appeared on the lawn September 15, but it was ten days before there were large flocks in my neighborhood. The first golden-crowned sparrow did not come until September 26, and it was October 3 before there were more than two or three golden-crowns among the fifteen or twenty white-

crowns on the lawn at breakfast time. Both species have been singing conspicuously during the past week. September 19 Dr. Smith and I saw a Say phoebe gracefully flycatching out from tall weed stems in a stubble field in the eastern foothills. Mrs. Grace Brubaker had a very good view of a red-breasted sapsucker in an oak by her house September 23. September 28 there was a Townsend warbler foraging in an almond tree just outside my window, and three days later I saw one in Los Gatos. An Audubon warbler came to the bird bath October 2, and the next day I heard the chittering call-note of the ruby-crowned kinglet. But Audubon warblers and ruby-crowned kinglets are still few and far between in my locality. The hermit thrush has been heard only two or three times since it was seen October 4.

We should see most of these winter visitant birds on the field trip to Mt. Madonna Park next Sunday; also we may see savannah sparrow, fox sparrow, varied thrush, golden-crowned kinglet, and perhaps some rare winter visitant or vagrant. Discovering new arrivals from the north adds zest to October field trips.

October 11, 1947
Glen Una Drive, between Los Gatos
and Saratoga.

Emily Smith