



EL PASO BIRD STUDY CLUB

THE ROAD RUNNER

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Ruby Allen - Chairman October, 1945

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IN MEMORIAM

May Bailey Jackman, charter member of the El Paso Bird Study Club, departed this life August 1, 1945. All lovers of nature lament the loss of such a student of the great outdoors.

THE MAY MEETING

The bird study group met at the home of Mrs. Slater on May 21, 1945. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the records of bird songs which had been loaned to the Club by Mr. Fred Cornelius.

THE NEXT MEETING

There will be a meeting of the El Paso Bird Study Club at Mrs. H. D. Slater's home, 516 Prospect Avenue, Monday, October 8, 1945 at 7:30 P.M. Mrs. George W. Young will discuss activities of bird clubs and Miss Emily Barlow will give an informal talk on birder's first summer's observations. Officers for the ensuing year will be elected.

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome Miss Sarah Durkee and Miss Emily Barlow as new members of the bird study group.

COMING EVENTS

The El Paso Bird Study Club is making plans to sponsor a series of lectures which General Ralph G. Meyers has promised to give this fall. El Pasos are asked to watch for the date, which will be announced soon. A magnetic and well informed speaker, General Meyers has appeared before several groups of El Pasos who covet an opportunity of hearing him again.

Dr. A. L. Hershey, Associate Biologist of the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, who has succeeded in filming Audubon's caracara so rare in New Mexico, will lecture before the club and present his film in the near future.

TOM MILLER KIRKSEY MEMORIAL

Mr. Strain and the El Paso Bird Study Club's Museum Committee are greatly pleased with the renovated bird specimens recently received from the Schwarz Studio in St. Louis, Missouri.

Four floor-to-ceiling habitat cases are now being planned by the College of Mines and Metallurgy. An available supply of glycerin, lack of which has helped to delay progress on the cases, has been located. The first to be projected is a case of Valley Birds, which is to be a part of the Tom M. Kirksey Memorial.

Last summer Mrs. Lena McBee stopped in St. Louis for a conference with Mrs. Thomas C. Miller and Mr. Paul Schwarz. Mrs. Miller kindly offered to pay for all specimens in need of renovation and for any new specimens needed to complete the Tom M. Kirksey Memorial. Mr. Schwarz expressed a personal interest in the project as he had been a friend of Tom's.

NEWS OF FOLKS

Mrs. Marguerite Wright, invaluable president since October, 1942, has moved from El Paso and is now teaching at La Mesa, New Mexico. We are glad that she is near enough to participate in our activities.

Dr. and Mrs. Brown W. Randel spent the summer in their cabin at Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Mrs. George W. Young enjoyed the three summer months in California.

Mrs. Maude Zilm Rogers spent a delightfully cool summer in Canada.

Major I. M. Epstein is still supervising a group of German hospitals near Marseilles, France. We are delighted to learn that he is expected to return to El Paso sometime in October.

Mrs. A. E. Eynon of Verona, New Jersey, reports that Lieutenant Eynon, who was stationed near Salzburg, Austria, is probably now in Vienna. Reports of his birding activities overseas appear in this issue of "The Roadrunner."

Mrs. Lena McBee visited her sister at Wyatt, West Virginia during her summer vacation. She established a summer record, in that vicinity, for the black-poll warbler, generally thought to nest in loftier altitudes.

NOTES FROM OVER-SEAS

Lieutenant Eynon identified the following birds enroute to Italy: March 18, 1945 - N. Y. Bay - herring gull, (abundant); Bonaparte's gull, (flock); Mar. 18 - Off Sandy Hook - great black backed gull 1; Mar. 19 - Off Delaware capes - gannets, 12; horned grebes, 6; meadowlark, 1 - out of sight of land, this bird suddenly appeared alongside just as the ship was entering a fog bank. It disappeared around the bow and I did not see it again Mar. 24 - 900-1000 miles east of Hampton Roads, Va. - northern phalarope, 1; Mar. 26 - 40 W, 37 N - jaeger, probably parasitic, 1; petrels, 3; Mar. 28 - 200 miles south of Azores, petrel, 1; Mar. 30 - 6000 miles west of Gibraltar - petrel, 1; Mar. 31 - 18 W - 37 N - shearwater, (small), 1; 17 W - 37 N - peregrine falcon, 1, circling close over ship; Apr. 1, 1945 - 175- 275 miles west of Gibraltar, shearwaters, 3, obviously small, very white-bellied and whitish on under wing surfaces. Light gray above with throat and upper breast dusky. Very faint or no apparent wing stripe; kestrel, 1, at 1617 hours, 275 miles west of Gibraltar, suddenly appeared alongside and went around the bow; Apr. 2 - 75 miles west of Gibraltar - gannet, 2; Apr. 2 - 100 miles west of Gibraltar to Strait of Gibraltar - lesser black- backed gull, several following boat from sunrise on; European barn swallow, 1; Apr. 2 - at entrance of strait of Gibraltar - gannet, many going north at entrance; European barn swallow- 1, many crossing north over entrance; Apr. 3 - Western corner of Mediterranean - English sparrow, 1, came aboard; herring gull, 1, adult, lesser black- backed gull, several; Apr. 3 - Oran Harbor at evening - tern, flock, large species; Apr. 4 - Mediterranean - lesser black-backed gull, 6; Apr. 5 - Between Sicily and Sardinia - owl, 1 - small like saw-whet, resembling screech in color- came aboard and was captured- released at dark; Apr. 6 - Arrived at Naples, Italy. (19 species - 12 identified, 7 not specifically determined).

A bird trip on August 26, 1945, in Austria added the following specimens to Lieutenant Eynon's list: carrion crows, 3, (could be rooks, due to similarity); chaffinches, 4; house sparrows, 10; white wgtails, 5; tree creepers, 2; great tits, many; marsh tit, 1; goldcrest, 1; lesser white - throats, several; robins, 6; European barn swallows, 30; Martins, 6; white - backed woodpeckers, 4; kestrels, 2; sparrow hawks, 2; mallard, 1; little grebe, several; common sandpiper, 1; coot, 3.

(Editor's note) - After reading these lists we conclude that what the overseas birder lacks in reference material has certainly been made up in perseverance.

INTERESTING RECORDS

The red-faced warbler was listed among the bird acquaintances of Mr. and Mrs. Wimberly this summer in the mogollons of New Mexico.

Black - chinned hummers built this year for the third consecutive season in a Chinese elm at the home of Mrs. Maude Zilm Rogers on Grant Avenue.

Other interesting data is as follows:

May 20, 1945 - short eared owl at Ascarate, (Harper, Mc Bee)

May 30, 1945 - California , cuckoo with worm in bill, Ascarate Park, (Wright); also painted buntings in song, (McBee, Allen)

June 5, 1945 - 1 orchard oriole - Country Club Road - (Bantin, Barlow, Wright, Allen)

June 23, 1945 - pair of western blue grosbeaks building in a small Chinese elm at Ascarate Lake- (Allen, Wright)

July 17, 1945 - 2 yellow-headed blackbirds, (males), at Ascarate Lake (Barlow, Allen, Wright)

Aug. 6, 1945 - pair of canyon towhees at Mc Kelligion's Canyon, also 1 lark bunting in summer plumage (Barlow, Allen)

Sept. 8, 1945 - 1 Nashville warbler at Ascarate Lake (Allen), also flock of 40 Avocets over the lake.

MAY BAILEY JACKMAN

May Jackman's interest in life and her contributions to it circled so widely and so sincerely that one cannot pretend to speak of all the loss and grieving that her going on, on her way must cause. As a teacher, which was her big work, she was counted the best mathematics teacher in the city's schools. She always taught more than arithmetic. She taught numbers with the help of bird and botany lore, geology and archeology and kept her classes lively with interest as to where she would turn their minds next. Included in every day's work was schooling and practise in good citizenship and in friendship with our neighbor Mexico. Tolerance, good humor and clear understanding as she went along were her well established guide posts. Such was her teaching form,-- all the time herself, an indefatigable student, climbing the mountain for bird and botany work, keen-eyed for fossils and Indian culture, a devoted student of world affairs, she was always seeking the high places for her thoughtful interest and study.

The El Paso Bird Study Club has to thank her for careful notes of bird life and wishes here to express gratitude for her friendship and sorrow for her going.

ELSIE McELRY SLATER

THE BIRDS OF SECTION 10

Section 10 is one square mile in the vast bed of glacial Lake Wisconsin. It is often not easy to get to: in winter the roads, such as they are, may be snow blocked for weeks; in spring the bottom drops out of the roads and cars bog down to the axles in the peat stretches between the sand islands.

Some birds from the El Paso migrant list nest there and more pass through to nesting grounds farther North. In the great wet hay marshes, surrounded by aspens on the peat and by jack pines and scrub oak on the sandislands, the sandhill cranes dance their nuptial dance with the oddly awkward control of first class comedians, bowing, and flapping their enormous wings, and trumpeting at daybreak near their big nest. A pair nests there every year, for the marsh is cut for hay, keeping it clear of the dense growth of willow that would soon choke it if left uncut, and it has escaped the severe drainage which would leave it vulnerable to fire destroying it for crane habitat. Rails nest there too: soras and virginias especially, and in early spring one hears the incessant clicking of yellow rails among the grasses. They had us fooled for years for we never could chase one out and finally decided they must be frogs! It took a visiting ornithologist to convince us that they were really birds after all; and he had to do it by talking. To this day I've never seen one... just heard the clear, tantalizing clicking all around me for hours as I sat in the blind.

One of the first sounds in the early spring dawn, is the winnowing of the jack snipe. High over the pussy-willows and aspens the elusive, haunting sound swells and fades. Soon the bitterns start pumping, the prairie chickens boom on the marsh and the ruffed grouse drum on their venerable white pine logs on the sand islands. It's like a symphony of witch music in the cold, spring dawn.

In March and sometimes even in April, we sat shivering in sheepskin coats in our blinds as the geese flew overhead....long strings of "wavies" (blues and snows), and Canada geese honking on their way North.

The horned larks nest in the abandoned fields in the sparse growth between clumps of pungent sweet fern, often when the snow is still on the ground.

The male marsh hawk sky-dances, looping the loop, and when he comes close one can hear him calling "Dorothy! Dorothy!" When Dorothy finally settles down to incubation, he feeds her by dropping meat from on high which she flies up to catch in the air. It's a wonderful way to find the nest as she always goes right back to her duties after each meal.

Occasionally short eared owls fly over the meadows. In the breeding season the male suddenly falls in flight, and no wonder, for he is clapping his wings under his body, and on a still morning one can hear the sound. A very fancy job of wooing it is too!

There are fine warm days in May, but, then again, we sometimes have fine snow storms in May. Frosts may come in the low places in any month of the year. While the birds from the El Paso List display and the dawn rings with the sound of their calls, the marsh of Section 10 is still frozen. One can dig through the moist black peat and find ice in early July.

Only banding will tell us whether some of these birds, which raise their young on the marsh of Section 10 are the same individuals we see in El Paso, feeding along the Rio Grande and buffeted by wind and dust on the mesa.

FRANCES HAMERSTROM

MESILLA VALLEY NOTES

Gleaned from the interesting notes of Mr. H. C. Williams of Las Cruces, N. M., are the following records: Jan. 1944 - blue goose at Sander's Ranch Pond; Apr. 7, 1944 - 22 snow geese near Hatch; Apr. 7- nest of phainopepla in Las Cruces; Apr. 27, 1945- ground dove; Apr. 30, 1945 - marbled godwit.

Mr. Williams reports that the rufous is the commonest hummingbird in the fall migration with broad-tails taking second place. Phainopeplas and Inca doves are becoming fairly common in the area.

BIRDING IN THE GILA RIVER VALLEY

The Gila River Valley, west of Silver City, N. M., is a delightful birding area. Ten days spent there during the first of August this year yielded 35 species identified and almost as many more unknown to us or of doubtful identification.

In the yard and orchard, Western mourning doves called all day long. Several of their nests had babies in, August 15. As we gathered apples or pears, mockingbirds, two pairs of orioles (Bullock's) three Western tanager, several red-shafted flickers, five Mearn's woodpeckers, and a few house finches flitted in the trees.

Only two nests of the English sparrow were noticed, but many other sparrows were flitting about. On the fences, meadowlarks occasionally gave a faint echo of their lovely spring song, and from posts or tips of branches, numerous flycatchers silently darted into the air and promptly returned to their perches. Among these were Arkansas kingbirds, ash-throated flycatchers, black and Say's phoebes, and Western wood pewees. Four pairs of vermilion flycatchers were of as great delight as were several pairs of Western blue grosbeaks.

A Treganza's heron frequented a sand bar below the bridge that spans the Gila. Turkey vultures circled daily over field and pastures. Several sparrow hawks lived in a cottonwood behind the barn, their squatter's rights challenged by a pair of mockers that had nested there. One day as we coasted down an incline, watching a covey of half-grown Gambel's quail, a ferruginous rough-leg, intent on the same prospect, let us approach within ten feet before he lazily flapped away. Western crows flew overhead or congregated, to quarrel in a dead tree. Brewer's blackbirds stalked in the stubble of a newly-mown alfalfa field. A Western house wren daily inspected beams and cornice of the porch, and Arkansas goldfinches played and fed between a cottonwood and the clothesline. Canyon towhees scratched underneath the rose bushes. From the river growth, Western yellowthroats sang, but they remained invisible.

Each afternoon, as we drove the cow home from the pasture, we saw numerous cliff swallows flying low over the water tanks, sometimes touching the water, then circling back to the corn field. At dusk, hundreds drifted back to the river. Killdeer ran about on tiny stilts, occasionally taking off and coasting to another landing field. A flock of 35 lark buntings would rise as we neared their feeding place and sail, a lovely picture in black and white, to another spot, to continue their soft gossip while they ate. An occasional shrike scolded from live oak or pinyon.

High-light of the visit was the discovery of a California Cuckoo's nest some 20 feet up in a large apricot tree. On August 13, we frightened the mother from the nest. We looked down on two downy black babies, all black with a tiny yellow line here and there, until we tapped on the limb that supported the nest; then two huge, yellow mouths flew open, hiding almost completely their dark bodies.

As we drove reluctantly away from the ranch on our way to El Paso, a large roadrunner walked out of the shrubbery beside the trail, bowed twice with dignity and grace, and walked back into the opening from which he had emerged. It was a perfect farewell and, we hope, an invitation to return with other, more-experienced birders.

MARGUERITE WRIGHT