

News from the Bird Banders  
WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

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DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

Western Bird Banding Association

President Mr. Harold Michener,  
418 N. Hudson Ave., Pasadena, Calif.

Vice-Presidents Miss Jessica A. Potter,  
1118 Santee St., Los Angeles, Calif.  
Mr. Ernest D. Clabaugh,  
18 Lenox Road, Berkeley, Calif.  
Mr. T. T. McCabe,  
Indianpoint Lake, Barkerville, B.C.

Secretary Mrs. Myrtle S. Edwards,  
225 East 11th St., Claremont, Calif.

Business Manager Mr. Walter I. Allen,  
Route 2, Box 651, Pasadena, Calif.

Custodian of Reports Mr. John McB. Robertson,  
Buena Park, California

Editors of the News Mr. Harlan H. Edwards,  
225 E. 11th St., Claremont, Calif.  
Mr. Harold Michener,  
418 N. Hudson Ave., Pasadena, Calif.

Councillors The officers, ex-officio, and  
Mrs. Ella H. Ellis,  
910 Grattan St., Los Angeles, Calif.  
Miss Blanche Vignos,  
915 S. Carondelet St., Los Angeles, Calif.  
Mr. James A. Calder,  
Buena Park, California  
Mr. J. Eugene Law (Past President),  
2620 Foothill Blvd., Altadena, Calif.  
Mr. Wright M. Pierce,  
Box 343, Claremont, Calif.

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## Los Angeles Chapter

President                    Mr. J. Eugene Law  
 Vice-President            Mr. Harlan H. Edwards  
 Secretary                 Mrs. Ella H. Ellis

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EMERGENCY BANDS may be obtained from Mr. Edwards, to whom a memorandum of all new bands, including serial numbers, check letters, and sizes, should be promptly sent. Send Edwards a Postcard!

TRAPS and PUBLICATIONS may be purchased from Mr. Allen, to whom, also, the annual dues of \$1.00 should be sent.

REPORT BLANKS and RACK FILES of the News may be obtained from Mr. Robertson. A copy of all annual or semi-annual reports of birds banded should be sent to Mr. Robertson promptly after the close of each period, in order that he may complete the annual census.

The Association has for sale through its Business Manager:

Hoffmann - "Birds of the Pacific States"    @ \$5.00 plus postage

Wyman & Burnell - "Field Book of the Birds  
 of the Southwestern United States" @ \$3.50 " "

Audubon Bird Cards, postcard size, color  
 reproductions from paintings by  
 Allan Brooks -  
 2 sets of 50 cards each issued to date - \$1.00 per set

Potter Folding Trap, 4 compartments       @ \$5.00 plus postage

Michener Water Trap, 1 compartment       @ \$5.00 " "

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The columns of the News are open to discussion of banding problems. To each operator occurs phases pertinent to his own station and experience and his ideas are sure to be of interest to other operators. Two such problems are presented in this issue by Mr. & Mrs. Michener and by Mr. Robertson, and no doubt will recall to many who read them incidents which bear directly upon these subjects. Let the News readers have the benefit of your experience, on these or other problems.

## RELATION BETWEEN RAINFALL AND NUMBER OF BIRDS

By Harold and Josephine R. Michener  
(Presented at the January, 1929, meeting of the Los Angeles Chapter)

At an earlier meeting, we agreed to look into what relation, if any, we could find between the abundance of birds taken from our traps and the occurrence of rain. We have as a banding group rather concurred, perhaps, in the opinion that a heavy day's catch occurred just prior to or during a rain.

With this in mind, we secured from Mr. M. S. Jones, U S. meteorological observer for Pasadena, his tables of rainfall for the years we have been banding. These we copied on Year-by-day sheets making a curve that showed rainfall by inches and also a record of days as recorded clear, part cloudy and cloudy. On similar sheets we made curves showing the number of birds taken from our traps each day, calling each capture one, whether a repeat or not. These curves were then compared with the rainfall curves for 1925 and 1926. We expected to include also 1927 and 1928, but the absolute lack of results confirming our theory of more birds with an approaching storm has led us to abandon this, at least for the present. As to relationship on the data presented the answer is simply - none whatsoever.

The weather data are doubtless insufficient for our purpose. We may need to separate the general storm coming in a more or less definite track from local conditions. These storms always seem to me to influence the kind of birds we get. Our spring and summer fogs seem always to influence the number of repeats and new captures of our resident House Finches. Many other factors - wind, temperature, moisture, etc., doubtless enter.

As to the birds themselves, there are, of course, seasonal fluctuations of great magnitude and irregularity, as one glance at our curves for 1925 and 1926 will show, and great variation for different years. A peak due to weather conditions superimposed on a departing bird population may fail to register entirely, while one coinciding with the stress of feeding young birds on an easily trapped species like our House Finches may reach a truly imposing height.

Our station keeps the traps in operation practically all the time we are at home, but for such a study we find numerous times when they are not working. All the necessary household errands, shopping, etc., involve longer or shorter periods of idleness for the traps. Disturbing factors such as cats, dogs, chickens, hawks, or for that matter even a group of bird lovers in the yard may make great differences in a day's catch, while work or play in our own or adjoining yards may obscure results. The gradual deterioration of traps before a climax and general overhauling occurs is another item.

Still we do not abandon the idea of some connection between weather and bird population. One observant of birds or banding cannot do this. The factors are too many and varied for so simple a solution as the one we used.

Pasadena, California - January 10, 1929.

## A PROBLEM IN LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

By John McB. Robertson

The debris cone of the lower Santa Ana River, which forms the greater part of the coastal plain area of Orange County, is crossed in many places by what the early settlers called "sand ridges". These are really flat topped ridges of low elevation, their axes following, in a general way, the direction of greatest slope of the coastal plain, and their sides sloping gently away. These ridges mark the pathways of long forgotten flood waters that left their burden of silt, to be shifted and changed by the wind and later by man. These ridges always consist of rather coarse sand in their higher parts and the soil becomes finer and more retentive of moisture as one gets farther from the crest of the ridge.

Now, to see how this surface formation effects the local distribution of our Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia cooperi): The first choice of this bird is a riparian association, but it can adapt itself to much drier situations. Town and village offer shrubbery and lawns that meet their needs, and in the country weed patches adjacent to irrigated lands offer associations that they can utilize throughout the year. Just what degree of moisture is essential to this bird is an open question, but I believe that moist earth is a necessity for its well being. My home is located on the crest of one of the ridges described above, and, although there are available drinking places and shrubbery, we do not have resident Song Sparrows. Less than one half mile to the northwest, and a little more than one quarter of a mile to the south, there are resident birds, nesting every year. Both of these locations are below the slopes of our sand ridge and on a finer, more moist soil, and near land which is subject to irrigation. Our porous sandy soil does not retain moisture long on the surface, even when irrigated, and when not irrigated it gets very dry during the long rainless months.

But we do sometimes have Song Sparrows here for short periods. My notes for the past six years record six observations of Song Sparrows on our premises, three of them being in February and three in October. Now, where do these birds come from? If they are birds crowded out of their regular haunts by competition, you would expect them to appear at the time of maximum abundance of the species, or just at the close of the nesting season. Do these birds have a period of wandering in early spring and again in the fall, or do these appearances indicate a migratory movement? If such a migratory movement exists, what is its magnitude? Are our breeding Song Sparrows the same individuals that are to be seen in the same places throughout the year?

Questions for bird banders to work on.

Buena Park, California - January 8, 1929.

Jan., 1929

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#### ECHOES FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT FILE

The replies to our questionnaire postal cards have been coming in ever since the cards were mailed out December 1, 1928. 236 cards were mailed, and at the date of writing this, January 8, 1929, 110 replies have been received; 64 of these are from banders who were active during 1928, and 44 have requested that forms be sent them for making reports to the W.B.B.A., some of the others having forms left from last year, or having already sent in their report; a total of 483 report forms have been mailed out, and reports have been received from 30 banders.

If you have not returned the reply half of your card, please do so at once. If you did not receive one, and have banded birds in the Western Province during 1928, please let me know. Also, please send a copy of your annual, or semi-annual, report in to me as soon as possible.

When you need bands from the W.B.B.A. emergency supply, you will save time by sending direct to Mr. Harlan H. Edwards, 225 E. 11th Street, Claremont, California. When such requests are sent to me, I have to get in touch with Mr. Edwards by telephone or by Special Delivery mail, and this causes unnecessary delay in filling your order.

There are indications that 1928 was a banner year, so far as the number of birds banded is an indication of success, but we doubt if anyone in the west equalled Mr. Frank H. Rose's total of 7476 ducks banded.

Mr. Fred Gallup, of Escondido, California, came to see us some time ago but we were not at home and he could not wait, so we missed seeing him. We are always glad to see folks who are interested in birds and hope that Mr. Gallup will come again some time.

At the December meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club we made the acquaintance of Mr. James A. Neilson, formerly of Wheatland, Wyoming, but now located at Upper Lake, California. Mr. Neilson hopes to start banding at Upper Lake at an early date, and we welcome him as a new recruit to the ranks of California banders.

On the evening of January 7, we had at our home Mr. & Mrs. Frank L. Farley, of Camrose, Alberta, who are enroute to Florida, and made it the occasion for an impromptu bird banding meeting inviting in Mr. & Mrs. Byron Deshler, of Yorba Linda, California; Miss Ethel McNeil and Mr. & Mrs. James A. Calder, of Buena Park, California. Mr. Calder showed about 150 slides of birds and nests, including some very fine pictures of the nesting colony of California Gulls at Mono Lake. Mr. Farley has banded California and Ring-billed Gulls for two seasons at Bittern Lake, near Camrose, and some of the returns of his first season's work are shown on the map that appeared in the last issue of "The Condor".

John McB. Robertson,  
Custodian of Reports.

## LOS ANGELES CHAPTER MEETINGS

The 40th regular meeting was held November 18, 1928, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Michener, in Pasadena, with 15 members present. In the absence of Mr. Law, the meeting was called to order by vice-president Edwards.

By unanimous accord, the secretary was requested to convey to Mr. Walter I. Allen the sympathy of the members of the Chapter in the recent death of Mrs. Allen.

Mr. Michener was called on for an account of a trip he had recently made to Philadelphia, Washington, and New York. The trip was made to attend a meeting of the National Electric Light Association, but some time was enjoyably spent with various bird banding leaders. He mentioned visits with Dr. Wetmore, Mr. Lincoln, Dr. Stone, Dr. Schneider, Dr. T. S. Palmer and others. Mr. Lincoln spoke of the scarcity of funds available to carry on the banding work, but later he and Dr. Wetmore seemed to think that conditions would be better than in the past. In the Biological Survey they are now classifying dead birds as to causes of death; so, in making our reports we should mark dead birds as returns and state cause of death. The records show a very small percentage killed in banding. Mr. Lincoln discussed the application of the terms "repeats" and "returns" and asked Mr. Michener to remind the western banders that while the word "return" was used primarily for migratory birds, it might be applied to any bird that had been absent from the traps for more than three months, "repeat" being limited to those recovered within a shorter period. If the bander had not been trapping regularly, it should be noted under "Remarks".

Mr. Lincoln spoke of the desirability that all banding associations join in the use of the Northeastern Bird Banding Bulletin for publication of banding articles. Mr. Michener told him that it would be necessary for the Western Association to double its dues if membership in the Northeastern Association be included, and that, logically, our affiliation is with the Cooper Ornithological Club, which offers us the use of the columns of The Condor.

A very interesting paper on water birds was given by Mrs. Calder illustrated by slides from pictures taken by Mr. Calder and Mr. Pierce. Splendid pictures of mature birds, young, and nests were shown, among them pictures of gulls taken at Bolsa Chico at the March, 1926 meeting of the Chapter, and a number taken on Coronado Islands at the time of the last annual meeting of the Cooper Club. It was an unusually delightful paper.

A nominating committee for officers for 1929 was appointed; Mrs. Edwards, Mr. Robertson, and Mr. Michener, chairman.

Ella H. Ellis, Secretary

The 41st meeting of the Los Angeles Chapter was held December 9, 1928, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Law, in Altadena, with 23 members and guests present.

Dr. Loye Miller was asked to tell about a visit he had recently made to Arizona. He reported a list of some 35 or 40 species of birds noted there in the dead of winter, with at least one practically new to the state. He spoke of the need of more winter work in Arizona, the information about birds to be found there at this time of year being rather indefinite. He found a number that are supposed to be out of Arizona at this season, among them the Pyrrhuloxia, Cardinal, and Mexican Ground Dove. Palmer and Crissal Thrashers were there singing only their whisper songs. At one permanent camp, hot cakes seemed to be a favorite food of Gilded Flickers, Thrashers, Cactus Wrens, Gila Woodpeckers and Shrikes. The Gila Woodpeckers stored the excess in the little holes in dead cholla stalks, from which place the Thrashers stole them.

Mr. Law gave a paper on his observations of the acorn storing habits of a Lewis Woodpecker during the early part of last winter. Some pictures were shown of the stored acorns, the "chopping block", and the shuck litter from eaten acorns.

Several members spoke of having seen Audubon Warblers and humming-birds at sapsucker borings in willows. Mr. Pierce told of a jay at his place which completely filled a flicker's home with walnuts. Mrs. Michener reported the return in November of an Arizona Hooded Oriole banded two years ago in January. A letter was read from a correspondent in Tokio, Japan, acknowledging receipt of the Michener Water Trap and the Potter Folding Trap sold by the W.B.B. Association, giving his first experiences with them. We trust that by now he has found them adapted to the catching of Japanese birds, as they are standard equipment for western banders in this country.

Ella H. Ellis, Secretary.

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On the following page are two unusually interesting lists of total birds banded during 1928. That of Mr. and Mrs. T. T. McCabe, near Barkerville, B. C., is notable for the paucity of returns and the quantity of Siskins captured. It may be compared with profit with the lists of the two previous years at the McCabe station, which appear in Vol. III, no. 1, p. 6 of the News.

The Michener list has some striking features, too. Any doubts ornithologists may have entertained about the fact of migration of Anthony Towhee and San Diego Song Sparrow would seem to be settled when one station bands 125 and 149, respectively, of these species. The variety and number of warblers, vireos, and goldfinches speaks volumes for the Michener Water Trap.

## BIRDS BANDED IN 1928

McCabe Station, Barkerville, B.C.Michener Station, Pasadena, Calif.

	Returns	New		New
American Merganser		2	Black Phoebe	4
Ruffed Grouse		2	Western Flycatcher	5
Am. 3-toed Woodpecker		1	Hammond Flycatcher	1
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	3	California Jay	15
Hammond Flycatcher		6	Plain Titmouse	8
Tree Swallow		16	Bush-tit	8
Black-headed Jay	1	10	San Diego Wren	3
Rocky Mountain Jay	5	5	Mockingbird	42
Long-tailed Chickadee		3	California Thrasher	10
Columbian Chickadee	1	1	Russet-backed Thrush	8
Varied Thrush		10	Dwarf Hermit Thrush	9
Robin		35	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	8
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		3	Western Warbling Vireo	4
Western Warbling Vireo		1	Least Vireo	1
Orange-crowned Warbler		1	Cassin Vireo	1
Yellow Warbler		2	Lutescent Warbler	7
Audubon Warbler		8	Yellow Warbler	3
Magnolia Warbler		2	Audubon Warbler	38
Townsend Warbler		1	Macgillivray Warbler	1
Grinnell Water Thrush		4	Long-tailed Chat	3
Macgillivray Warbler		5	Golden Pileolated Warbler	36
Pileolated Warbler		4	Arizona Hooded Oriole	46
American Redstart		5	Bullock Oriole	9
Rusty Blackbird		8	Brewer Blackbird	73
Wn. Evening Grosbeak		6	Western Tanager	35
Eastern Purple Finch		6	Black-headed Grosbeak	67
Alaska Pine Grosbeak	1	11	Lazuli Bunting	1
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch		5	California Purple Finch	10
Hepburn Rosy Finch		4	House Finch	2296
Pine Siskin	6	2143	Willow Goldfinch	18
American Crossbill	1	55	Green-backed Goldfinch	48
Wn. Savannah Sparrow		4	San Diego Towhee	21
Wn. Vesper Sparrow		1	Anthony Towhee	125
Fox Sparrow		5	Fox Sparrow	3
Shufeldt Junco	37	592	Thurber Junco	10
Wn. Tree Sparrow		3	White-crowned Sparrow	3
Wn. Chipping Sparrow	1	68	Gambel Sparrow	198
Gambel Sparrow		410	Golden-crowned Sparrow	6
Golden-crowned Sparrow		35	San Diego Song Sparrow	149
Rusty Song Sparrow	6	75	Lincoln Sparrow	2
Lincoln Sparrow	1	63		
Totals	61	3624	Total	3335

Number of species - 41

Number of species - 40



## A VISIT TO THE OFFICES OF THE BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

By Harold Michener

On a recent business trip I had an opportunity to visit the offices of the Biological Survey, at Washington, D.C., where I found everyone very cordial indeed. Mr. Lincoln gave up a large part of two days to talk with me on the problems of bird banding and still there were more that we could have discussed. He showed me the way the banding records are handled, and some of the special investigations that are being worked out from this accumulation of data.

Mr. Lincoln spoke of the double postcard which is regularly sent to a bander when a report of a bird recaptured reaches Washington ahead of the original banding record. He said that some banders seem to feel that in sending out these cards the Biological Survey is unkindly critical of the bander for not having the banding record in before the return report was received. Mr. Lincoln explained that these cards are sent merely to get at once the banding information necessary for the proper entries in regard to such recapture, and that it is no reflection on the bander, for, under the present system, it is realized that reports of recaptures will often reach the Biological Survey before the original banding records. The card is not sent out as a reminder that a report is over due but if it acts as such I am sure Mr. Lincoln would have no objection.

Mr. Lincoln showed much interest in special investigations that can be carried on by individual bird banders, and spoke highly of some work that is being done. He also recognizes the potential value of the work of the bander who has time for only a very few birds per year.

The few hours spent at the Biological Survey were thoroughly enjoyed and I wish each one of the banders might have a similar experience.

Pasadena, California, December 16, 1928.

## FURTHER NOTES ON SONG SPARROW DISTRIBUTION

By J. Eugene Law

Mr. Robertson has permitted me a preview of his article on "A Problem in Local Distribution" of the song sparrow which appears in this issue of the News. My experience in a quite different association has been somewhat similar.

In early 1922, I established my home at the upper edge of the broad slopes which extend out from the base of the mountains, and over which the village of Altadena has spread itself. The immediate vicinity of my home was then and still is covered with the chemical association, with a scattering of oaks. A deep arroyo adds many trees and shrubs.

The stream bed, usually dry except immediately after rains, is devoid of the riparian elements which demand perennial moisture, though a short half mile up the arroyo there begins the gorge of a steep walled canyon where the stream is perpetual. A half mile to the west across the slope fan, one comes to residences with well watered yards and much greenery. In the latter places it is probable that the San Diego Song Sparrow breeds. I have never detected one at any season within the canyon gorge, but I am told that a generation ago the arroyo opposite my house had a perennial stream, and it is probable that environment hospitable to breeding song sparrows existed at that time throughout this arroyo. A half mile down arroyo, there are springs and song sparrow tangles which may well attract breeding birds at the proper time.

About my home song sparrows have not been detected after mid-February or before late July, but during autumn and winter the period during which they were present has lengthened and the number of individuals has increased. During the time of our residence here bird baths on my place have always been supplied by a drip, and the past two years the place next south of me has had much sprinkling. Traps have not been used consistently.

The following is a summary of my local records of the song sparrow:

1922,	Oct.	10	First occurrence
1923,	Sept.	15	17. Next seen
	Oct.	16	Banded no. 52117
1924,	Feb.	18	No. 52117 retaken
	"	21	Band again seen
	July	25	A note was heard. Not again detected
	Sept.	19, 20, 23, 24.	The notes were heard
	Oct.	2	Band seen
	"	6	" "
	"	9	Caught No. 52117
1925,	Jan.	7	My note book states; "My banded song sparrow has staid till now, and is usually near our front door."
	Nov.	8	Banded No. 19176-A
	"	11	No. 19176-A repeated
1926,	Jan.	7	Banded No. 11768-A and No. 19176-A returned
1927,	Nov.	20	Banded No. 11040-B
1928,	Jan.	14	No. 11040-B returned
	Oct.	28	Banded No. 17222-B
	Nov.	4	Banded Nos. 17232-B and 17244-B. No. 17222-B repeated.
	Nov.	18	Banded Nos. 17257-B and 17267-B
	Dec.	2	No. 17222-B repeated
	"	6	No. 17267-B repeated

This last summer, 1928, a spotted juvenal came in August and song sparrows have been about most of the time since.

Altadena, California, January 21, 1929.