

Along The Trail

by

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ken legg

Can you arrest a mocking bird for vagrancy? He has no visible means of support. But over in the next yard there is a bush full of pyracantha berries.

The bird books should be re-written, for what was a truth last decade may not be a truth today. I watched in itinerant mocking bird in Eureka last week then went home and read three books about him. The first was published in 1904 and said he was rare north of latitude 38 degrees; I am between 41 and 42.

The second book said in 1927 that mockers were found north along the coast as far as Santa Barbara. If they were visiting Eureka in those days we didn't know about it.

The third text, published in 1944, had a little better information when the authors stated that "individuals (Mocking birds) are prone to appear at points much outside areas of regular breeding, and that they have been spreading northward in the last 40 years."

Maybe the range extension is not so strange if we consider a few things. People have been spreading too. And where people go they make conditions which are acceptable to mocking birds.

Mockingbirds like to feed on the berries of shrubs and, as people go northward they take shrubs; shrubs which are now bearing berries and maybe the mockers are learning that Eureka berries are as good as Santa Cruz berries.

Two authors mention that the spreading (of mocking birds) "seems correlated with progressive human settlement and cultivation of valley lands." Again "perhaps (the) seeming onset of warmer and drier climatic conditions is to some degree accountable."

One other mockingbird has been recorded in Humboldt county; one spent Christmas of 1922 here.

Last week, on a cloudy, dreary day I stood at the office window drinking my coffee and looking out. A whole congregation of birds was gathered about an old fish pond and there was a lot of bathing going on. Robins, golden crowned sparrows, white crowned sparrows, song sparrows, English sparrows, linnets, Audobon warblers and myrtle warblers were taking baths.

Up in a peach tree just coming in bloom sat a flock of cedar waxwings and a mockingbird. Had he come in with the waxwings? Had these nomads led him to peregrination? If he tried to keep up with them he would see a lot of country before they disbanded.

Everyone knows the mockingbird is associated with Santa Barbara and lemon blossoms, warm evenings and song filled nights, magnolias, and valley and blossom-scented air!

I watched the mocker go around the building and out on a lawn where robins reigned. The robins pursued him; drove him away. Then I said, are these "northern" robins? Are they robins that have never been into mockingbird territory and are they afraid of this bird because they never saw one before? Are they maybe like us, who are most afraid of things we don't know?

A poor reception for a poor, traveling Mockingbird all the way from the southland, across miles and miles of washed out highway, damaged railroad tracks, redwood forest and Mendocino hills!

AIRPLANE LOOKS

LIKE TOY, COSTS \$500

Louisville, Ky. (AP) — An airplane that resembles a large toy is the first homemade two-wing craft to be certified by the civil aeronautics authority in Kentucky. The biplane, built by Joseph K. Wesley, 32, is 12 feet long and its wings span 16 and 13 feet. It cost less than \$500 to build.

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