

Bird Observations by Florence Anne (Sumner) Henderson from 1928–1937 in Elk Grove and Lodi, Central Valley, California

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ABSTRACT

I report on historical bird observations of Florence A. (Sumner) Henderson from Elk Grove and Lodi, California over 1928–1937. This is among the earliest known accounts of birds from this region of the Central Valley. As a teacher at Elk Grove High School, Florence Henderson established a bird banding station and used birding and banding to teach and document bird life with her students. She documented 85 bird species in Elk Grove from 1930–1937, and 47 species in Lodi from 1928–1929. Born as Florence A. Sumner, she was daughter to noted biologist Francis B. Sumner and niece to field ornithologist E.L. Sumner, Senior.

The importance of natural history museums as archives of historic bird records cannot be overstated. In them are snapshots of regional biodiversity, many of which remain undiscovered and unpublished. In the archives of the U. C. Davis Museum of Wildlife and Fish Biology (MWFB) is an extraordinary case from an unlikely source that reveals a small piece of southern Sacramento Valley avian history from the first half of the 20th century.

In our archives was a sheaf of letters containing bird records from Elk Grove and Lodi from 1928–1937. They were sent in January 1938 to Joseph Grinnell, at U. C. Berkeley, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (MVZ), by school teacher Florence Anne Henderson. Was this an interesting and vague connection perhaps? Not at all. Through some detective work done over a full year, the connection became clear. Upon receiving Henderson's records, Grinnell forwarded the packet in April 1938 to zoologist John T. Emlen, then at U. C. Davis. Emlen was characterizing the birdlife of the Sacramento Valley and had intended to incorporate Henderson's field notes into a comprehensive assessment. Unfortunately, Emlen never completed his assessment, and her field records were filed away with other notes from that

era. In this paper I report on Florence A. (Sumner) Henderson's observations from Lodi over 1928–1929 and from Elk Grove over 1930–1937.

To understand the validity of these records, I sought to determine the credibility of F.A. Henderson and in doing so, uncovered an interesting history. Florence A. Henderson was born Florence Anne Sumner on 6 February 1905 to Francis Bertody Sumner and Margaret E. Clark in New York. Francis B. Sumner (1874–1945) was a professor of Biology and among the first ichthyologists at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. His work on variation and heredity of *Peromyscus* mice (Sumner 1918) was of paramount interest to him, but changes in the priorities of Scripps forced him to abandon that research. From that period, he shifted to working on fish coloration and heredity and thereby made significant contributions in Ichthyology (Child 1947). Through his work on *Peromyscus*, and broader associations at U. C. Berkeley, Sumner established a friendship with Joseph Grinnell and in 1920 he accompanied Grinnell on an expedition to Death Valley (Grinnell 1923, Sumner 1929).

Beyond the notable Francis B. Sumner, the Sumner name is familiar to many well-versed in California ornithological history and bird banding. Eustace Lowell Sumner, Sr. (1871–1943), Florence Sumner's uncle, was a field ornithologist and active bird bander and served as president of the Western Bird Banding Association (WBBA) for several years in the 1930s (Miller 1944). He managed western banding programs and records from numerous sources, synthesizing them into quarterly reports of the WBBA during that era. These reports, an important legacy to bird banding in the Western United States, are digitized and reside at MVZ. E.L. Sumner's son, Eustace Lowell Sumner, Jr. (1907–1989), also an accomplished naturalist, became an important figure in the U. S. National Park Service and Sierra Club. Sumner, Jr. was assigned in the 1930s to study the California Quail as a cooperative project between the California Division of Fish and Game and the University of California. There, and under the supervision of Grinnell, he attained his Master's Degree. Both E. L. Sumner Senior and Junior published numerous papers on life history of birds in California including studies of wintering sparrows (Linsdale and Sumner 1934), raptors (Sumner 1940), and a synthesis on the life history of the California Quail (Sumner 1935). With Joseph Dixon, Sumner, Jr. wrote *Birds and Mammals of the Sierra Nevada* (1953), based on field work conducted in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Hence, the connection of Florence Anne Sumner to Grinnell was through her father, uncle, and perhaps first cousin.

The original envelope that contained Henderson's records tells the story of these connections. Now tattered and foxed, this envelope was sent to Florence from her father Francis Sumner asking her to share her notes with Grinnell. That original envelope, with Florence's records inside, was re-addressed to Grinnell, and then forwarded by Grinnell to Emlen (Figure 1).

As was all too common in that era, the history of the women in families was poorly documented. It was impossible to find details about Florence. Even her father's autobiography failed to mention her at all (Sumner 1945). Fortunately, I uncovered a 40-page letter written by F.A. Henderson titled, Francis B. Sumner Family and Memories of La Jolla 1914 archived in the U.C. San Diego library. From that source, I gleaned that Florence accompanied her father and mother to Naples, Italy (age 5) and then moved to U.C. Berkeley in 1912. Shortly afterwards, the Sumner family settled in La Jolla.

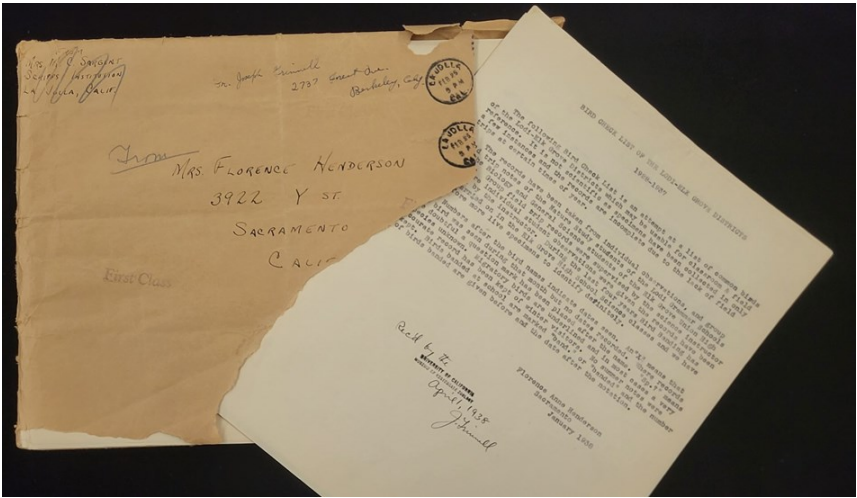


Figure 1. Parcel of Florence Henderson's field notes mailed to Joseph Grinnell and ultimately to John T. Emlen at UC Davis. These now reside in the MWFB Historic Archives (June 2022).

Florence's interest in nature came initially from her father. The family loved to camp, and her father spent summers teaching her natural history. In one account from her years in elementary school, she wrote *"My father taught me science and drawing during summer vacations. And I had many lessons in accurate scientific drawings which helped me a great deal in my science courses in college. In the 5th. or 6th. grade we were given an assignment drawing leaves for art. I started as I'd been taught, but the teacher put the leaf on my paper and said, 'Trace around it.' The indignation when I told that at home was great. I didn't realize how disgusted my father was till I met the principal in recent years, and she recalled Father's trip to school about this."*

Florence Sumner obtained her bachelor's degree in Zoology with a minor in Botany in 1927 at U.C. Los Angeles. She obtained her teaching credentials a year later at U.C. Berkeley. She taught nature study and hygiene from 1928–1929 at Lodi Elementary school, the former an experimental course. She then

joined the faculty at Elk Grove High School, teaching biology and general science from 1931–1937 (Figure 2). She also taught an activity class in photography because, she wrote, *“the dark room was next to my classroom.”* Florence remained there until her marriage to James Henderson in 1938, at which time she retired from teaching and lived in Sacramento. I can only speculate about who got Florence interested in birds, she did not write about it in the family history, except to say one of her hobbies was bird banding.

Florence Sumner took an interest in birdwatching, working with her uncle in banding birds, and then became a bander herself. Florence was ahead of her time, and influenced by her family, a teaching visionary. She recognized early that birds could unify biology and nature study with the diversity of students in the classroom, no easy feat with prevailing attitudes in the early 1930s. This was before the publishing of Roger Tory Peterson’s seminal *A Field Guide to the Birds* (Peterson 1934), covering eastern North America; the western edition did not appear until 1941. Peterson’s field guides revolutionized how people viewed birds and gave rise to the birding movement. Ms. Henderson introduced bird watching in 1931 as a tool in her young naturalist clubs and biology classes at Elk Grove High School and started banding to affect how students viewed birds and addressed conservation. She obtained a banding permit (facilitated by her uncle who managed permits in those days) and established a bird banding station at the high school. E.L. Sumner, Sr. asked her to write a letter for the WBBA on her banding “experiment” in 1933. To gain insight into her motivations, I quote these excerpts of her essay, titled *Bird Banding as a Teaching Method* (Sumner 1933a).

Figure 2.
Florence Sumner.

Source: 1935 Elk Grove High School
Yearbook Photo

(Courtesy of the Elk Grove Historical
Society).



"The following problems have presented themselves to me in my teaching of bird study both in High School and Elementary School. First, the boy who liked to impress the class with his various cruel methods of killing birds; second, the farmer's son who has grown up to think that all hawks and owls are destructive and birds in general rather a nuisance; third, the girl who doesn't know a hummingbird from a turkey buzzard, and is rather proud of it; fourth, many others who just aren't interested. The ordinary school science laboratory does not have the facilities for keeping live birds for study, and a teacher finds it difficult to stimulate interest in preparing bird skins for a museum and at the same time teach conservation. Students are likely to let the collecting instinct be upper-most.

In February of this year, as a new experiment, we took out a bird-banding permit and set up a bird-banding station at the [Elk Grove] High School. We banded 65 birds the first year. I have seen the following results from our brief experiment, which would lead me to think it a worthwhile teaching device: first, an awakened interest in birds not only throughout the science classes but the rest of the school; second, this interest carried home and extended to watching nest building and eggs (not destroying); third, timing the growing period of the young and studying activities of the parents. These activities bring about a change in attitude from destructive to protective, interest in bird photography, increased ability to recognize birds from sight, and interest in bird migration.

The new school year started auspiciously with one owl, one mockingbird, one red-shafted flicker, two sparrow hawks banded within the first three weeks, and students have been watching anxiously for the return of the first winter migrants to see if any of their friends are returning. One student saw some of his banded linnets in his yard during the summer. If by this awkward interest a few less nests are robbed, a few less birds killed or wounded each year, and a few more students become interested in a scientific study of bird habits, bird banding in school may be considered not as a frill, but as a valuable teaching device."

Florence ran her banding station for four years, banding several hundred birds total, over the course of each school year (September through May). It is unfortunate that her story was relegated to an essay buried in a quarterly report. She was onto something, a vision that we would have to wait another 40 years to see blossom, when bird observation and conservation was at last incorporated into many school curricula. In her 1938 letter to Grinnell, Henderson wrote. *"The following bird checklist is an attempt at a list of common birds of the Lodi-Elk Grove Districts which may be usable for classroom and field reference. It is not scientific, as specimens have been collected in only a few instances and the records are incomplete due to lack of field trips at certain times of year. During the last 4 years, bird banding has*

been carried out on/in the Elk Grove High School science classes and therefore we had more live specimens to identify correctly.” I add as a frame of reference, that in the 1930s, documenting birds by specimens was still thought the only scientific way to substantiate records. From these sources, there is no question that the Sumner family influenced early conservation biology in California, and it is satisfying that Florence’s previously untold story brings one more Sumner into focus as an important contributor.

With humility, I am able to fulfill Florence’s desire to share her records, for which I have no doubt of their validity, and thereby to expand our understanding of regional bird distribution in an earlier era.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

The following records and checklist are reorganized to reflect current English names and scientific nomenclature and ordered according to the current AOS checklist (Chesser et al. 2021). The records are from Elk Grove and an approximate 8-mile radius around town, and from Lodi. Species notes in quotations are presented verbatim from Henderson; other comments are mine. Ms. Henderson’s records are a synthesis of banding and class field trip notes, the originals of which have since been lost. Ms. Henderson does not mention methods for capture of birds banded but since mist nets were not widely used for banding until the 1950s, I do not think they were used. She did indicate that some of the ranch boys would bring in birds from their homes (usually nestlings) to be banded.

In 1930, Elk Grove was a small, country town. Census records are not available for Elk Grove in the 1930s, but the population was in the low hundreds in the 1940s. The town was located on a Southern Pacific Railroad line and surrounded by ranchlands mixed with lagunas, streams, and marsh. Some orchards, hops, and other crops were grown nearby. Aerial photos from 1940 show a few small groves of mature valley oaks. In 1930, Elk Grove High School was located near the corner of Elk Grove Boulevard and Elk Grove Florin Road (38.4096°N and 121.3722°W) where Kerr Junior High School currently exists. The only main east-west road was Elk Grove Boulevard which connected to California Highway 99. From 1930–1937 Henderson recorded 84 species, the total combined from her banding program and high school student field trips (see Appendix). Summer-time records are lacking, as she recorded birds only throughout the school year (September–May).

In 1930, Lodi had a population of 6,788, and viticulture was already the leading industry. While at the elementary school there, Ms. Henderson detected 44 species of birds over two years, again lacking summer records (Appendix).

Notable was the absence of the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) in her records. The starling had not yet spread to the area, and the cowbird, may have been present, but still rare. Also absent were observations of Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Rock Pigeons (*Columba livia*). Winter waterfowl also were poorly represented. Although these lists are incomplete, they provide a synoptic summary and remain important as a baseline of species present in this region of the valley in the early part of the 20th century. Notes were not provided for every species observed and she did not indicate numbers, so it would be difficult to speculate the abundance of bird species in the region in her era. Last, although she mentions several specimens brought into her, I report only on those where specimens survived and are archived in museums.

- Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) ("Honkers"). "Canada Geese are migratory birds." There is no reference to these being either Cackling (*B. hutchinsii*) or Canada geese. The earliest date was "fourth week of September 1929" (Lodi), latest date 18 April 1944, and no records are reported from mid-April through late September. No nesting was reported.
- California Quail (*Callipepla californica*). "On 27 April found nest with 8 babies [eggs?] near river in Lodi." Reported as a resident species.
- Ring-necked Pheasant (*Phasianus colchichus*). The earliest observation was 30 January 1930. A nest with eggs was found on 2 April 1932 and nestlings observed in May 1932. The species was not established as a breeding species in the Sacramento Valley by the early part of 20th Century (Grinnell et al. 1918) and was more coastal in distribution. This is the earliest record of nesting in Sacramento Valley and coincides with the earliest specimen from Sacramento County, a female collected along Snodgrass Slough (near Elk Grove) on 21 July 1932 (Field Museum of Natural History, FMNH 160402).
- Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*). "One live specimen was brought in on 23 January 1936 from Elk Grove."
- Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*). "Records incomplete—Resident in summer, autumn, spring; absent for most part during winter months."
- Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). "One bird found dead on 19 March 1935 in Elk Grove."
- Hummingbirds. Henderson reported seeing hummingbirds in 1929 and 1930 in Lodi and in 1931–36 in Elk Grove but was unable to identify them to species. She reported "some resident, others migrant." It is likely that the resident birds were Anna's Hummingbirds. As of 1940, the species in Northern California was more coastal and primarily restricted to

chaparral and woodlands of the foothills of the Sierra and Coast Range, but ornamental plantings had already begun to create favorable habitat elsewhere in the state (Grinnell and Miller 1944). A November 1936 record she noted in Elk Grove almost certainly was an Anna's Hummingbird.

- Sora (*Porzana carolina*). "Found dead near highway 5 miles north of Elk Grove, 6 October 1933."
- Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*). "One bird found dead on 28 Sep 1933, 3 miles west of Elk Grove." It is an MVZ specimen (MVZ 63313). Also, in 1931, one was banded on 6 April 19, and one observed on 5 May in Sheldon, northeast of Elk Grove.
- American Coot (*Fulica americana*). Captured one bird on 2 December 1931 near Florin and one was banded on 8 January 1937 in Elk Grove. "Resident—lives near marshes and rivers not found near town."
- Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*). "A nest was found on the roof top of Elk Grove High School shop class with 4 eggs. This is a resident species." Young were observed on 10 May 1929 in Lodi and 27 April 1932 in Elk Grove. Single banded Killdeers were observed on 25 October 1933, 30 April 1934, 7 December 1934, 31 May 1935, 12 May 1936, and 7 April 1937.
- Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*). "One bird found dead on 20 November 1932." The species was observed annually from January–May and again from October–December.
- American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*). "On 2 April 1937, a flock of about 200 flew over Elk Grove High School."
- Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). "One bird found dead on 15 October 1928 in Lodi. Banded 7 nestlings in 2 nests 8 miles west of Elk Grove on 7 April 1934" (in the area of Stone Lakes and Sacramento River). "Resident in marshes and along rivers near Elk Grove and Lodi."
- Great Egret (*Ardea alba*). "Found along river, records incomplete, irregular visitant." This species did not seem to be common in the area as it is now. Populations in California were impacted by feather trade (Grinnell and Miller 1944).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). "A pair observed one mile north of [Elk Grove] town on creek (Laguna Creek) in March 1937."
- Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). "Resident in spring, summer and autumn; migrate south in winter." One bird was banded on 18 January 1937 in Elk Grove. On 19 October 1929, and 31 were observed migrating

in flocks. The status of Turkey Vultures has changed and they now occur widely in winter on the Valley floor (Airola 2011).

- Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonicus*). "One found dead 20 November 1933 in Elk Grove."
- Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*). "One found dead in November 1932 in Elk Grove." One bird observed in November 1932 was a possible Sharp-shinned Hawk.
- Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). "Banded one on 27 February 1934."
- Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*). Banded birds included one on 31 May and 9 October 1933, one 15 February 1935, a pair on 21 Sep 1936, and one on 11 March 1937. See comments on mixed clutch in American Kestrel account.
- Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Banded four birds, one each in November 1933, 4 March 1935, 24 January, and 7 December 1937.
- Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). "Banded one bird on 21 February 1933 in Elk Grove."
- Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*). Listed as a resident, "seen by the river" (she did not state which, the Sacramento or Cosumnes).
- Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*). "Common resident near river." A granary tree was near Lodi Elementary on 4 May 1929.
- Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*). "Resident along rivers; not so often in town."
- Nuttall's Woodpecker (*Dryobates nuttallii*). The species was observed in February 1937 in Elk Grove. Notably, both Downy and Nuttall's woodpeckers were reported as rare in town. Nuttall's Woodpecker vocalizes often with readily recognizable calls, so it seems likely that the dearth of record might accurately reflect its absence in the rural town. However, Belding (1890) noted that the species was a common resident in the valleys and foothills of Northern California in the late 1800s.
- Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). A "Yellow phase" flicker was reported in January 1929 in Lodi and October 1931 in Elk Grove. Many birds were banded in Elk Grove in 1933 (October and November), 1934 (January and December), 1935 (several months), 1936 (October), and 1937 (January and March).
- American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). "Banded 4 nestling kestrels on 23 March 1933." A pair of kestrels were tending four kestrel chicks and one Western Screech-Owl chick in the same nest cavity in a Eucalyptus tree,

which was reported in a note in *The Condor* (Sumner 1933b, Figure 3). Single birds were banded in 1933 on 21 September and 4 November. Single birds were banded on 8 January and 3 December in 1934, 19 December 1935, and 7 February 1937.

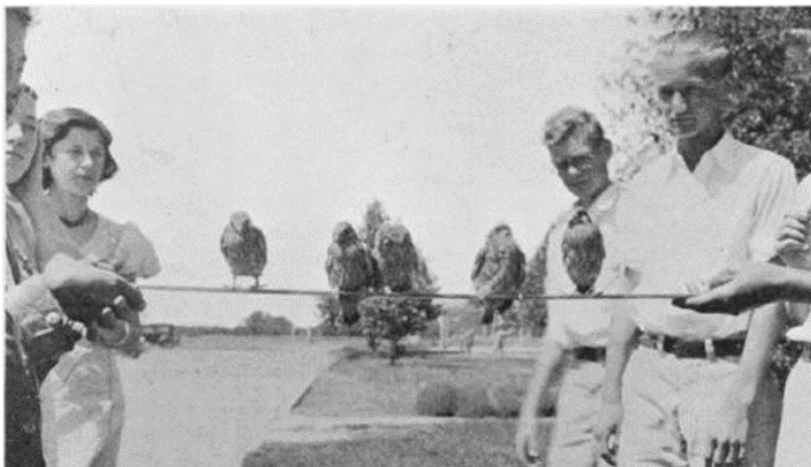


Figure 3. Students from Elk Grove High preparing to band Western Screech-Owl and American Kestrel (from Sumner 1933b).

- Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*). "Resident in Lodi found down by the river, not common in town. In Elk Grove found nesting under bridge $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from town and elsewhere." The species was seen other years, but the notes are incomplete.
- Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). "In 1937 few birds banded." Henderson reported several winter observations of "kingbirds", which I believe were probably misidentified Say's Phoebe.
- Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). Considered a resident by Henderson. Birds were banded on 20 April 1933 and 20 January 1937. The species was recorded in every month over the course of Henderson's records (Appendix). This further substantiates Robert Ridgeway's remark that "there was hardly a place visited in the Sacramento Valley where this species was not plenty" (Belding 1890).
- Yellow-billed Magpie (*Pica nuttalli*). "Common resident in Elk Grove." The birds were banded in September 1933 in Elk Grove. "Re-sighted a banded magpie 3 miles south of Franklin on 6 November 1936."

- American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). “Resident in surrounding country.” One bird was banded on 12 May 1933.
- Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). A specimen, found dead on 6 April 1933 in Elk Grove, was deposited at the MVZ (MVZ-64629). It was identified there as a Ruddy Horned Lark (*E. a. rubea*), the Central Valley’s breeding subspecies, which has declined over the last 50 years. “Another live specimen was brought in on 19 October 1936 in Elk Grove.” A few other birds were banded in 1936.
- Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). “Nested at Elk Grove High School April and May each year.” It is interesting that other than the Cliff Swallow, no other swallows are mentioned in Henderson’s notes. Other reports failed to mention a high diversity of swallows and noted Tree Swallows lacking in reports of Storer in 1925 (Trochet and Engilis 2014).
- Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*). The species was recorded nesting in Elk Grove in May 1932. Exact conditions of nesting were not detailed. The lack of records from the town may reflect that the species had not started to widely nest in the valley in this era.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Corthylio calendula*). “Winter visitant Oct–Mar.” The earliest fall record was on 14 October (1929 in Lodi) and the latest winter date was 22 March (1930 in Lodi).
- Wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*). “Heard along rivers and in wooded canyons –seldom seen. A resident along rivers.” A pair was observed on 17 May 1930 in Lodi.
- Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*). “Resident in marshes of this region, not seen often near town.” One bird was banded on 20 March 1933 in Elk Grove.
- Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). This species was spreading in the Central Valley during the time of Henderson’s records (Arnold 1935). In Lodi, her first record was on 13 October 1928, and it was recorded annually in both Lodi and later in Elk Grove through 1937. Numerous birds were banded annually in Elk Grove from September 1933 through March 1937. Thus, the species was established in southern Sacramento County by the late 1920s. Tracy Storer reported that mockingbirds had nested near Sackett Ranch (Winters, Yolo County) in 1926–1927 (Storer Field Notes from 29 July 1928) and were first observed in Davis in 1928 (Storer field notes July 20, 1928). He did not report them in these areas in 1925. Emlen (1937) observed territorial singing in Davis, Yolo County, in 1935.

- Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*). "One bird banded on 10 January 1934 was found dead in Placerville (65 miles east of Elk Grove) in March 1934." Henderson considered the species a winter visitor in Elk Grove in the 1930s. Most records are from January–March, and September–December. But individuals were found in Lodi in April and May in 1929, but not in spring in Elk Grove.
- Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). One was observed November 1934 in Elk Grove.
- Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*). An individual of the "Russet-backed" subspecies was banded in October 1936.
- Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*). Several thrushes observed in winter were attributed to this species.
- American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). "Winter visitors—a few pairs nest in this region." A nest with two young was found on Elk Grove High School grounds in May 1931. Another nest with three young was found there in May 1932. Henderson reported the species as mostly leaving in April. Large flocks were reported in November–December. Henderson reports, "On Feb. 11, 1939 - 5:10 to 5:30 pm, Birds in flocks of 50 to 100. As far as one could see, to each side were birds. There were at least 1000."
- Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*). The earliest fall arrival date was 8 October (1929, Lodi), and the latest spring record was 1 June (1933, Elk Grove). She listed the species as an "irregular migrant." One bird banded in Modesto in April 1935 was found dead at Elk Grove High School on 25 May 1935.
- House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*). Recorded by Henderson as a resident in Elk Grove 1930–1936. This species was first recorded in Sacramento in 1888 and were first introduced to Stockton from San Francisco in 1883 (Belding 1890).
- American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*). The earliest fall arrival date was 19 November 1931 at Elk Grove High School. The latest spring date was 1 March 1932. Found in "flocks" on school grounds each winter in Elk Grove.
- Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*). The species was observed on 2 April 1932 in Elk Grove, with no number given.
- House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*). Many were banded from 1933–1937, including several fledglings in April and May.
- Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*). A male was banded on 9 May 1984 in Elk Grove. Others were observed in winter.

- Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*). “Resident in area in towns.” Nesting was confirmed in Elk Grove in May 1932. There were far more observations of Lesser Goldfinches than American Goldfinch in Elk Grove.
- American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*). The species was a “resident, usually found near river.”
- Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). “Large flocks observed in March 1932 in Elk Grove.”
- Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerine*). “May be resident, records include nest found in Lodi in 1929 (no exact date given).” This is an interesting comment because recent evidence of nesting is limited to a single record at Cosumnes River Preserve in 2020 (Trochet 2020).
- Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). The species is a winter visitor with a latest spring record of 4 May (1929, Lodi). The earliest fall arrival was 14 October (1929, Lodi). “One dead bird found on 4 November 1932 in Elk Grove.”
- White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*). Numerous birds were banded from 1931–1937. The earliest fall birds were on 2 Sept (1933, Elk Grove), latest spring records were birds banded on 24 April (1933, Elk Grove). This was the most abundantly banded bird by Henderson. All were reported as the Gambel’s subspecies (*Z. l. gambelii*).
- Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*). Several were banded in Elk Grove in 1933–1937. The earliest fall record was 21 October (1931, Elk Grove) and the latest spring date was 19 March (1936, Elk Grove).
- Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). Several were banded in spring and fall, and one bird was banded on 17 May 1933, suggesting a possible breeding bird. No mention is made of this species as it is nesting in the area.
- Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). Reported as a resident bird.
- Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*). “Resident usually seen by the river—seldom in town.”
- Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*). Recorded in late winter and spring from Elk Grove. One given date was 11 May 1932. Others given as months (see Appendix).
- Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*). “A resident species in Elk Grove.” Several were banded over 1933–1937.
- Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*)—A single dead bird was recovered on 24 May 1929 in Lodi. “At the time this was identified as Hooded Oriole—

later the existence of this species in the region was questioned.”
Specimen not located. Without a specimen, this record may be best considered as hypothetical.

- Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Birds were banded on 15 May 1933. It was considered a resident with a local migration.
- Brewer’s Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). Many birds were banded from 1933–1937 in Elk Grove.
- Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*). “Summer resident according to other records.” Recorded in spring and fall in Lodi in 1928 and 1929. No evidence of local breeding was provided.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*). All birds reported were Audubon’s Warbler (*S.c. auduboni*). Two birds were banded on 22 and 31 January 1934. Winter visitants occurred during October–April each year. The earliest arrival date was 17 October (1929 Lodi), and latest date was 2 May (1929 Lodi).
- Wilson’s Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*). “A dead bird was brought in on 8 May 1931; found dead in Florin.”
- Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – One was observed on 4 May, with no year given.



Horned Lark
(*Eremophila alpestris*).
10 April 2017.
Meiss Rd, Sacramento, California.

Photo by Ed Harper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many hours were spent deep diving into the internet and into the archives of the Elk Grove Historical Society to uncover Ms. Henderson's story. My deepest gratitude goes to Louis Silveira of the Elk Grove Historical Society for initially showing interest in this story and helping me find the connections of Mrs. Henderson with Elk Grove High School, and for providing access to their archives. I would also like to thank John Trochet, Irene E. Engilis, Dan Airola, John Harris, and Danielle Fradet who all made suggestions to improve this manuscript. This is a historical publication of the Birds of the Central Valley Program.

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Lark Sparrow
(*Chondestes grammacus*).

2015.

Kelso Rd, San Joaquin Co.,
California.

Photo by Patricia Bacchetti



Appendix. List of species recorded by Florence (Sumner) Henderson and students: / = Elk Grove 1930–37; \ = Lodi 1928–29; X = present at both locations in respective month (s).

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Canada Goose	X	/	/	X					X	/	/	
Wood Duck										/	/	
Mallard				/								
Green-winged Teal			/									
California Quail	/	/	/	X	/				/	X	/	
Ring-necked Pheasant	/	/		/	/				/	/	/	
Pied-billed Grebe	/											
Mourning Dove	/	X	X	X	X				/			\
Rufous Hummingbird			/									
American Coot	/	\	X	\							X	/
Common Gallinule				/	/				/			
Sora										/		
Killdeer	X	X	X	X	X				\	X	X	/
Long-billed Curlew	/										/	
Wilson's Snipe	/	/	/	/	/					/	/	/
Greater Yellowlegs			/									
American White Pelican			/	/		/					/	
American Bittern				/						/		
Great Blue Heron	/	/	X	X	\				/	\		
Great Egret			/	X								
Black-crowned Night-Heron			/									
Turkey Vulture	/		\	/	/				/	/	/	
White-tailed Kite											/	
Sharp-shinned Hawk											/	
Cooper's Hawk		/	/	/						/	/	
Red-tailed Hawk	/	/		/	/					/	/	
Barn Owl	X	X	X						/	/	/	
Western Screech-Owl	/	/	/		/				/	/	/	/
Great Horned Owl	\	X	\									
Burrowing Owl	X	X	X	/					/		/	/
Short-eared Owl	/	/										

Appendix (continued). List of species recorded by Florence (Sumner) Henderson and students: / = Elk Grove 1930–37; \ = Lodi 1928–29; X = present at both locations in respective month (s).

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Belted Kingfisher			\	X	\						X	\
Acorn Woodpecker	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	/
Nuttall's Woodpecker				/	/							
Downy Woodpecker	/	/			\				/	X	X	
Northern Flicker	X	X	X	X	X				/	X	X	X
American Kestrel	/	/	/	/	/				/	/	X	
Black Phoebe	/	/	/	X	X					X	X	
Say's Phoebe	/	/									/	
Western Kingbird				/	/							
Loggerhead Shrike	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
California Scrub-Jay	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	/	X
Yellow-billed Magpie	X	/	/	/	X				/	/	/	X
American Crow	X	X	/	X	/				/	/	/	X
Horned Lark		/		/						/		
Barn Swallow				/	/					/	/	
Oak Titmouse	/	/			/					\		
White-breasted Nuthatch		/							/	\		
Marsh Wren	/		/								\	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	X	X	X							X	X	X
Wrentit			X	/	/					\		
Western Bluebird	/	X	X	X					X	X	X	/
Swainson's Thrush										/		
Hermit Thrush	X	/		/						X		
American Robin	/	X	X	/	X				X	X	X	X
Northern Mockingbird	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X

Appendix (continued). List of species recorded by Florence (Sumner) Henderson and students: / = Elk Grove 1930–37; \ = Lodi 1928–29; X = present at both locations in respective month (s).

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Cedar Waxwing	X	X	X	X	X	/				X	X	X
American Pipit	X	X	X	X							X	X
House Sparrow	/	/	/	/	/				/	/	/	/
Purple Finch	/	/			/							
House Finch	/	X	X	X	X				/	X	X	X
Lesser Goldfinch	X	X	X	X	X				/	X	X	X
American Goldfinch		/		X						\	/	
Spotted Towhee	/	/	/	\	\					/	\	
Chipping Sparrow	/	/	/	/								
Lark Sparrow		/	/	/								
Savannah Sparrow	/		/		/					/	/	/
Fox Sparrow			/	/								
Song Sparrow	/	/	/	\						\	/	/
White-crowned Sparrow	/	/	/	/	/				/	/	/	/
Golden-crowned Sparrow	/	X	/	/						/	X	/
Dark-eyed Junco	X	X	X	\	\					X	X	X
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Western Meadowlark	X	X	X	X	X	/			X	X	X	X
Yellow-headed Blackbird		/		/	/							
Brewer's Blackbird	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Hooded Oriole					/							
Bullock's Oriole		\	\	X	/				/			
Yellow Warbler				/	/					/		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	X	X	X	X						X	X	X
Wilson's Warbler					/							
Western Tanager					/							