



SEQUOIA

AUDUBON SOCIETY

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County
Founded 1949

Volume 62, No. 3
February - March 2012

SCIENCE ART – WHAT IS IT? AND WHERE DO BIRDS COME IN?

BY DARRYL WHEYE

Stanford biologist Don Kennedy and I see science art as art that says something about the way the natural world works. But, we add a caveat: It needs to be presented with an explanatory caption to help decode the science and provide a fast track to related aspects of the narrative.

A while ago I was lucky to gain access to the closed stacks in the Stanford Art and Architecture Library. While there I searched for images of birds in catalogs of our finest museums and most treasured artists. I also searched for them in photographic compendia of cave art, archeological sites, and artifacts. Then, a few years ago, Don and I presented examples of bird art from across the 30,000-year pictorial archive in a small book. The book begins with the oldest confirmed image of a bird. Here's a slightly modified excerpt:

An Owl as Cave Art



Plate 1

Owl in Chauvet Cave, Vallon-Pont d'Arc, France, c. 30,000 BCE

© Photo: J. Clottes. In J. Clottes, ed., *Chauvet Cave: The Art of the Earliest Times* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 2003) *Science Art-Birds*



Plate 2

Modified Owl in Chauvet Cave, Vallon-Pont d'Arc, France

© 1997/2007 Eagle Owl Darryl Wheye.
Photo courtesy of J. Clottes. *Science Art-Birds*

Continued on page 4

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

February

Thursday, 9th 7:00 PM

Program: Birds of Botswana, Brazil, and Beyond

March

Thursday, 8th 7:00 PM

Program: Birding Class: The Mystery of Bird Song

(See program details on page 2.)

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details on page 3.)

January

Saturday, 28th

Panoche Valley

Sunday, 29th

Pinnacle National Monument

February

Wednesday, 1st

Mountain View Forebay and Shoreline Lake

Tuesday, 28th

Owling at Gazos Creek Road

March

Sunday, 4th

Surprise East Bay Location

Wednesday 7th

Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery Day Use Area

Sequoia Audubon Society

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Send comments and contributions to:

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MEETING PROGRAMS

BY SUE COSSINS

Birds of Botswana, Brazil, and Beyond

By Peter Schattner

Thursday, February 9, 7:00 PM

Since retiring two years ago from a scientific career at the intersection of biology and high-tech, Peter Schattner has been exploring all the hobbies that he never

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

(Parkside Way is west of Alameda de las Pulgas, between 26th and 28th Avenues)

had the time to focus on before. He's been especially enjoying traveling to out-of-the-way places that have beautiful birds and animals, and learning to capture some of their grace and magic with his camera.

At the February Sequoia Audubon Meeting, Peter will be showing some of his favorite images from his recent trips to various destinations including Northern Botswana and the Mato Grosso Region of Brazil. Although the emphasis definitely will be on birds, especially raptors and colorful birds, it is entirely possible that a few pictures of leopards or jaguars may work their way into the presentation as well.

Peter Schattner:

www.flickr.com/photos.peterschattner

Also on the February 9th program is a 20-minute PowerPoint© show by SAS President, Jennifer Rycenga, featuring the upcoming Great Backyard Bird Count.

Birding Class: The Mystery of Bird Song

By David Lukas

Thursday, March 8, 7:00 PM

How do birds learn to sing such beautiful songs? And why do they produce so many different types of vocalizations? David Lukas will help answer some of these questions and share his insights into the magical world of bird song – and will cover everything from the ways we study bird song, to the anatomy of how birds produce sounds, to some of the social behaviors that explain common bird vocalizations.

David Lukas is a California naturalist and the author of five books, including Sierra Nevada Natural History and Wild Birds of California. David grew up in Oregon but has been living in the Sierra Nevada and leading bird programs in California for nearly 20 years. His newest book is called Sierra Nevada Birds and it is the first comprehensive guide to the status, life history, and distribution of all the birds that occur in the Sierra Nevada. David will bring copies of this latest book, which sell for \$20 even. Learn more about the book at <http://www.lukasguides.com>.



Great Black Hawk
with fish

Photo by
Peter Schattner



FIELD TRIPS

BY GINNY MARSHALL

Panoche Valley

Saturday, January 28

8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Panoche Valley lies between Hwy 101 and Hwy 5 in San Benito County. Winter in Little Panoche Valley is great for raptors; Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, and Prairie Falcon are all possible. We also hope to see Roadrunners, Mountain Bluebirds, and in a good year, Mountain Plovers. We will plan to stop at Mercey Hot Springs where the special attraction is roosting Long-eared Owls. (A \$5 entrance fee is required). Bring lunch, liquids, and a full tank of gas as there are no gas stations between Hollister and I-5.

Directions: From San Mateo, take Hwy 101 south to Hwy 25; follow Hwy 25 through Hollister to Paicines. Meet at Paicines Reservoir, on the right just past the junction of Hwy 25 and County Road J1, 13 miles south of Hollister.

Leader: Leslie Flint
lflint@earthlink.net

Pinnacles National Monument

Sunday, January 29

8:00 AM

On Sunday, January 29, the day after Leslie Flint's Panoche trip, join Jeff Fairclough and Laurie Graham as they wend their way from Hollister to Pinnacles National Monument. Star attractions are, of course, California Condors, but other delights await, such as Canyon Wren, California Thrasher, an abundance of California Quail, and huge flocks of Wild Turkey. We will hike one or two trails in this gorgeous place, which may go through some of the caves. Bring a flashlight. There is a \$5 vehicle fee.

Directions: From San Mateo, take Hwy 101 south to Hwy 25; follow Hwy 25 through Hollister to Paicines. Meet at Paicines Reservoir, on the right just past the junction of Hwy 25 and County Road J1, 13 miles south of Hollister.

Leader: Laurie Graham
fair80@comcast.net

Mountain View Forebay and Shoreline Lake

Wednesday, February 1

9:00 AM – Noon. (½ day trip)

This area affords some of the most varied shorebird and waterfowl wintering habitat on the bay. We'll hope for White Pelicans, Black Skimmers, and Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal. This trip will involve walking on level, well-defined trails.

Directions: Meet at the end of San Antonio Road at 9:00 AM. From San Mateo, take Hwy 101 south to San Antonio Road and take the San Antonio Road – North exit. Follow San Antonio Road a short distance until it makes a right turn onto Terminal Road. Stop and park as close to the intersection as possible.

Leader: Leslie Flint
lflint@earthlink.net

Owling at Gazos Creek Road

Tuesday, February 28

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Participation is on a limited, first-come-first-accepted, basis, with a waiting list maintained. To join this field trip, and receive the details of when and where we are meeting, contact trip leader, Jennifer Rycenga

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga
smcbgeditor@earthlink.net

Surprise Trip to an East Bay Location

Sunday, March 4

8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

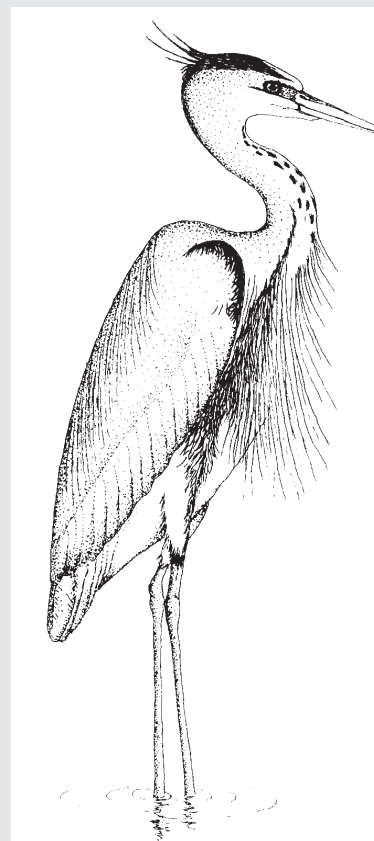
The exact location will be determined based on current reports at the time. Check the Sequoia Audubon web site one week before for details. Even better, join our yahoo group so you will be notified of activities and any last minute changes. To join go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SequoiaAudubon>. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Leaders: Sonny Mencher and Kim Kuska
soccerquiz@yahoo.com

Sequoia Audubon on the Web

Remember to check out our website for updates on field trips, conservation news, and links to great birding sites.

www.sequoia-audubon.org



Continued on page 4

Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery Day Use Area

Wednesday, March 7

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

This is a beautiful park along the banks of the Mokelumne River just below Camanche Dam. We will walk from the hatchery along the river looking for whatever we might find. Last year there were LOTS of Lewis' Woodpeckers.

Directions: Meet in the main parking lot for the fish hatchery, which is 15 miles east of Lodi off Highway 12. From Highway 12, turn north on McIntire Road. At the end of McIntire Road, turn right and follow the road straight until entering the Hatchery's parking lot located at the base of Camanche Dam. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers. Allow 2.25 hours driving time.

Leader: Leslie Flint

lflint@earthlink.net

Science Art (continued from page 1)

Art

In 1994 news of the discovery of Chauvet Cave in France and its walls full of Paleolithic art spread rapidly. Years earlier, a survey of seventy-two caves in France and neighboring countries, had listed over 2,000 animal images on the walls. Among them, horse images outnumbered the rest, with 610; bison followed with 510; and mammoths came in a distant third with 205. Fish accounted for a paltry 8, and birds (or their heads) for only 6.

The official cave Web site describes the Chauvet owl image as follows: "This finger tracing represents an owl. The position of the wings shows that its head is turned 180 degrees relative to its posterior face. The anatomical characteristics of the animal permit its attribution to Moyon Duc [Long-eared Owl] (*Asio otus*)..."

Science

Evaluating avian taxonomy based on an ancient figure etched into the soft surface of a cave wall is a difficult business, and an alternative interpretation is available. It may be that the bird is facing forward and that the species might actually be an Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*). Given Paleolithic artists' fascination with large and imposing creatures, that conclusion strikes the authors as more plausible. To emphasize the resemblance between the cave image and the Eagle Owl, we have inserted a drawing of its head into the accompanying image (Plate 2).

Other factors--the relative size of the birds, their presence in the cave, and the suite of other cave images--support the alternative hypothesis. Eagle Owls are the size of eagles and prey on the smaller Long-eared Owls. They nest in caves, whereas Long-eareds typically seek abandoned crow nests, found mostly in trees or shrubs. They are also impressive predators: they have been known to take down roe deer, and such accomplishments have earned for members of their genus (*Bubo*) a reputation as "Tigers of the Air."

In contrast, Long-eareds are more commonly preyed upon by others in their tribe. Long-eareds have even evolved a defensive posture: They lean forward while arching their wings--like a swimmer poised to dive from a racing block. Then, by lifting the trailing edge of their wings skyward, they frame their face and appear more formidable, the way "owl eyespots" on the wings of certain moths may fool predators into thinking they are too large to take.

Note: For an impressive one-minute video of the Eagle Owl see:
<http://www.dogwork.com/owfo8/>

Darryl Wheye is a writer, bird artist, former SAS board member and Science Art-Nature CEO. The modified excerpt is from *Humans, Nature, and Birds: Science Art from Cave Walls to Computer Screens*. Yale University Press, 2008. For more examples from the book, along with a timeline, see:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/stanfordbirds/HNB>

COUNTING CROWS

BY ROY CARLSON

No, not the band, nor Sheryl's family, but the now-familiar Corvid species occupying San Mateo County.

In October, I was asked by the Sequoia Audubon office to talk with two journalists who had asked about the large increase in the number of crows being sighted in our area. I spoke with the City Editor of the *San Mateo County Times* and a freelance San Carlos blogger who wanted to know why there are now so many crows in our downtowns and neighborhoods. While I couldn't answer the question as to why the explosion of crows in the last decade or so, I was able to confirm that this is a fairly recent phenomenon. When I moved to my current house in San Carlos on the small hill just west of Central Middle School in 1972, there were no crows (or ravens) to be seen in the neighborhood. Now, the two species are very common.

Continued on page 5



Boy Scouts from Pack 152 in San Mateo are working on their Naturalist Webelos Activity Badge. In November 2011 Nelle Lyons and Sue and Bob Cossins met with them at Radio Road in Redwood Shores to introduce them to wintering waterbirds.

Photo by Bob Cossins

OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

(Sequoia Audubon does not sponsor the following activities.)

“A Tale of Two Shorebirds” by Paul Donahue February 15, 7:00 PM, Sharp Park Library Community Room, 140 Hilton Way, Pacifica, CA

The Pacifica Shorebird Alliance is pleased to present an evening with ornithologist, photographer, and bird artist, Paul Donahue. His new program, “A Tale of Two Shorebirds,” highlights local shorebirds with an emphasis on two of the smallest – the Sanderling, which is federally listed, and the Snowy Plover, which is protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Information: Paul Donohue charadrius1@gmail.com

33rd Annual Winter Wings Festival February 17 – 19, Klamath Falls, OR

Produced by the Klamath Basin Audubon Society, this festival is the longest running bird festival in the nation. A small gathering that began as the Bald Eagle Conference over 30 years ago has now become an incredible event for bird enthusiasts of all stripes. Over 500 people have registered for the festival in recent years to enjoy presentations, workshops, field trips, and family activities. Keynote speaker is Kenn Kaufman

Information: <http://www.winterwingsfest.org/>

“Sparrows – The Little Brown Jobs” Workshops for the Birder & Naturalist with Alvaro Jaramillo, San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory February 21 & February 23, 6:30 – 9:00 PM (Instruction) – Sobrante Center, Redwood City February 26, TBA (Field trip)

Sparrows have afforded scientists important opportunities to learn about bird song, dialects, territoriality, and migration patterns. Come and learn how to simplify the identification of sparrows; gain an appreciation for this largely North American group of birds, and get a summary of their natural history and influence on ornithology.

Birding Level: Beginner on up. You must be a minimum of 16 years of age to participate.

Registration & Payment: Each workshop is \$150 per person and limited to 15-20 students. **Membership benefits have changed!** You must have an active membership in SFBBO to register for a workshop. To check your membership status, please call 408-946-6548.

Information : <http://www.sfbbo.org/activities/workshops.php#sparrows>

Instructor: Alvaro Jaramillo, SFBBO Senior Biologist

16th Annual San Diego Bird Festival March 1 – 4, Marina Village Conference Center, San Diego

The Conference Center is just steps away from San Diego’s species-rich San Diego River estuary. Nearby islands, Mexico’s Islas Los Coronados, complement the ocean view and offer the possibility of adding exotic pelagic bird species to festival-goers’ birding lists. Keynote speaker is Kenn Kaufman.

Information: www.sandiegoaudubon.org

Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival April 27 – 29

Enjoy birding during the breeding and migration season at one of the best locations in North America: Western Marin and Sonoma Counties. On-line registration opens in mid-February. *SAS board member, Melissa Hero, will be presenting at this festival and SAS will have a vendor table there. Save the Date!*

Information: www.pointreyesbirdingfestival.org

Counting Crows (continued from page 4)

I was able to debunk some theories as to the cause: (1) the Oakland Hills fire caused crows to move to our area, (2) edibles in schoolyards and parks brought them in, (3) Alfred Hitchcock is plaguing us from the Great Beyond [I made that last one up].

One question raised is somewhat intriguing – are there crow roosts in the county? VERY large roosts are known to occur east of the Rockies. As many of you saw, I put the question to Peninsula Birding on the internet. Sequoia Audubon asked for a summary of the responses, which is provided below. Many thanks to those who thoughtfully sent me their observations and comments.

- A long time Millbrae resident echoed my recollection of few-to-no sightings in the 1960s and 70s.
- There was a report of a man regularly feeding peanuts to a flock of 50-100 crows along the Bay Trail in Foster City.
- A roost has been observed along Blandford in Redwood City in the redwood trees.
- A roost has also been seen in the Lindenwood area in Atherton, with 200+ crows at dusk near Menlo-Atherton High School.
- Although not in San Mateo county, one observer has seen “thousands of crows” roosting in Central Park in the city of Santa Clara. Their numbers have greatly increased over the last few years.
- Several people reported “hundreds of crows” at dawn and dusk in Redwood Shores, especially near the Oracle campus.
- Raven roosts were reported in San Pedro Valley Park, the upper Tunitas Creek watershed, and around Dearborn Creek southwest of Memorial Park.

To follow up, it might be interesting if birders who regularly report to eBird periodically sent in counts of Corvids from some of these spots, as well as elsewhere in the county.

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

BY MICHAEL ROCHE

The consolidated financial statements provided here present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Sequoia Audubon Society as of May 31, 2011, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in San Mateo County.

If you would like to review the financial statements of Sequoia Audubon Society in more detail, please feel free to contact me at the address or phone number listed below.

Michael Roche, Treasurer
Sequoia Audubon Society
P.O. Box 620292
Woodside, CA 94062
650-529-1454

Sequoia Audubon Society, Inc Consolidated Balance Sheet May 31, 2011 (Unaudited)

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$18,029.80
Equity Securities	\$199,196.66
Property and Equipment, at Cost Net of Accumulated Depreciation	\$2,411.20
Other Assets	\$1,035.75
TOTAL ASSETS	\$220,673.41

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	\$0.00
Equity	
Restricted Funds	\$85,284.65
Unrestricted Assets	\$89,181.91
Net Income	\$46,206.85
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$220,673.41

Sequoia Audubon Society, Inc. Consolidated Statement of Operations For the Year Ended May 31, 2011 (Unaudited)

REVENUE

Grants	\$4,411.00
Membership Dues	\$1,390.00
Donations	
Membership	\$8,226.00
Restricted	\$80,225.00
Christmas Count	\$490.00
Field Trips	\$40.00
Investment Income, including net realized gains on investments	\$14,295.92

TOTAL REVENUE

\$108,780.92

EXPENSES

Newsletter	\$6,553.37
Office	\$1,751.06
Pot Lucks and Food	\$797.36
Program Expense	\$1,299.29
Liability Insurance	\$1,662.72
Garden Center Rent	\$1,500.00
Publicity	\$29.14
Conservation Committee	\$17.25
Field Trips	\$180.41
Conferences	\$84.20
Tax, Legal & Investment	\$1,015.00
Christmas Count	\$1,137.83
Membership Committee	\$53.04
Donor Letter	\$553.00
Professional Fees	\$13,425.62
Restricted	\$32,079.45
Other	\$435.07
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$62,573.81
NET INCOME	\$46,207.11

CONSERVATION REPORT

Restore Sharp Park

An extraordinary victory for people and the environment was won in early December 2011 when the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance for long-term restoration and management of Sharp Park with the National Park Service. Many individuals had contacted the Supervisors regarding the issue.

Below is a portion of a letter sent by SAS member Joe Morlan on 12/03/11 to the Supervisors. It encapsulates what we are trying to save at Sharp Park.

"I just want to add my name to the voices extolling the potential environmental and recreational value of returning the property to a coastal estuary. That would greatly enhance the wildlife diversity and value while providing recreational and educational opportunities as a wildlife viewing area. I urge you to seize this opportunity to return the property to an environmentally sustainable park which will provide educational and recreational benefit to all."

Joseph Morlan, Pacifica, CA jmorlan@ccsf.edu
SF Birding Classes start Feb 7 <http://fog.ccsf.edu/jmorlan/>

However, on December 20, 2011 San Francisco Mayor, Edwin Lee vetoed this legislation. On January 10th, 2012 the full SF Board of Supervisors met to vote on Mayor Lee's veto of Supervisor Avalos' ordinance. Unfortunately the vote mirrored the one-vote victory when the initial ordinance passed, but insufficient to overturn the mayor's veto. Sharp Park's future remains uncertain.

New Group Forms to Oppose Cargill and DMB's Proposed Development on RWC Baylands

By Nancy Arbuckle

Redwood City Neighbors United is a new group of Redwood City neighbors and residents who want what's best for the community. They have formed due concerns over Cargill and DMB's Saltworks Project, a project that has serious implications not only for the environment, but also for the local economy and the future of Redwood City and surrounding areas.

Cargill and DMB's Saltworks development is one of the biggest issues we are facing right now. Yet, some of the most important questions are not being discussed—the enormous traffic impacts, the threat to limited water supplies, and how the project might divert much-needed attention away from revitalizing RWC's downtown.

This group was organized to make sure people are aware of these critical issues and to demonstrate to city officials that the community is opposed to this development. This project is not only in the wrong place, but is incredibly risky—environmentally, financially, and for our quality of life.

RCNU supports responsible, smart growth that respects RWC's vision, as illustrated in the City's new General Plan that promotes growth downtown, near shops, restaurants, and transit. RCNU members do not want to see their community undermined by the Cargill and DMB plan to place houses on the salt ponds east of 101.

Please consider signing on as a supporter of Redwood City Neighbors United. The larger the base of support, the louder our voice! Visit rcnu.org to add your name.

Crystal Springs and Año Nuevo Christmas Bird Counts

By Leslie Flint, CBC Coordinator

December 2011 CBC's had fabulous weather with no rain, fog, or heavy wind!

For the Crystal Springs CBC, 90 counters tallied 197 species of birds, with two additional species (Harlequin Duck and Hooded Oriole) added during count week. This is the second highest total species count in the last 10 years (only 2007 with 204 beats that!). We are hoping that this number keeps us in the top 10 CBCs for the nation again this year.

For the Año Nuevo Count, 75 counters tallied 167 species, which is average for this count (at least over the last 10 years). One new species, Eastern Phoebe was reported for count week.

All numbers should be considered preliminary until the rare bird forms have been reviewed by the compiler, Al DeMartini.

A bonus for the Año Nuevo counters and their guests was a delicious BBQ dinner prepared by Bill and Andrea Cook at their ranch in Pescadero – a great way to celebrate New Year's Eve. Many thanks to all who counted and to Shari Deghi who arranged for the BBQ.

We certainly couldn't do it without you!!

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PERMIT NO. 293

Sequoia Audubon Society Membership Form

Individual membership for seniors (>62)
and students (<25)

\$15.00

\$20.00

\$25.00

\$

\$

Individual membership

Family membership

Donation to SAS

Total

Yes, I am interested in volunteering _____

Needles Newsletter Preference:

_____ Mail and / or _____ E-mail

E-mail address _____

County Birding

by George Chrisman

San Mateo County finished the 2011 year with a total 334 species reported, one behind our total for 2009. The complete list has been posted on the Sequoia Audubon Society website at <http://www.sequoia-audubon.org/SMCbirds.php>

Welcome!

Sequoia Audubon Society is the San Mateo County affiliate of the National Audubon Society. If you are a new member or have recently renewed, thank you! If you have yet to join, we look forward to meeting you. Please join in the activities of your local organization.

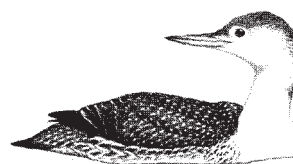
If you'd like to join the local chapter you can find membership information above, or on our website:
<http://www.sequoia-audubon.org>.

Please note: Due to cost constraints the printed newsletter will only be mailed to National Audubon members once a year. Local members (unless indicated otherwise) will receive five issues a year. If you'd like to continue to receive printed newsletters, please check the renewal date above your address and make sure you're up to date. If you prefer e-mail, you can subscribe to our e-mail newsletter any time on our website



Pacific Golden Plover seen at the Foster City Shell Bar during the CBC on December 17, 2011.

Photo by Leslie Flint



Red-throated Loon

The Bird Box
Rare Bird Alert
415-681-7422

Mission Statement

Sequoia Audubon Society protects native birds and other wildlife and their ecosystems in San Mateo County by engaging people of all ages in conservation, education, advocacy and enjoyment.