



SEQUOIA

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BROWN PELICANS: WHAT ARE THEY TELLING US?

BY ALVARO JARAMILLO

There are many joys to being a birder, ranging from the sheer pleasure of seeing something beautiful to contemplating the mysteries of migration to shorebird identification! One thing that is absolutely fun for me is to note year-to-year differences in migration. Where I live on the coast one of the most obvious arrivals is the appearance of squadrons of Brown Pelicans in late spring and early summer. By July, once the pelicans have arrived in force, then the Heermann's Gulls and the Elegant Terns also arrive. What these species have in common is that they breed well to the south of us, mostly in Mexico or southernmost California. Once they finish breeding they migrate north, not south, in order to take part in the feast that is the California ocean in late summer and fall.

In a typical year when these seabirds are breeding down south they have plenty of food, mainly small "bait fish" that they feed to the young. Then as the adults and young come north there is also a bounty of food off our shores to keep things humming along. Elegant Terns help the young out by fishing for them for weeks after they fledge. It is neat to think that those young terns being fed by the adults at Pillar Point Harbor may have come from Mexico — as a family group! The pelicans have a different strategy. The young must fend for themselves and it takes skill to plunge dive properly to procure a meal. Even in a good year perhaps half of them will succumb during their first year. Pelicans have to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, or they are done for.

So here we are in the summer of 2012 and we are hearing in the news that Brown Pelicans are being found starving all over the place. They are even showing an incursion into the Central Valley, the land of white...not brown pelicans! While crabbing and fishing at the harbor with my kids the other day the young pelicans were absolutely relentless trying to



Brown Pelican in flight, photo by Alvaro Jaramillo

(Brown Pelicans - continued on page 6)

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

September

Thursday, 13th 7:00 PM

How the Brain Identifies Birds

October

Thursday, 11th 7:00 PM

India -- Birds, Tigers, and the Taj

November

Thursday, 8th 7:00 PM

Thinking Like a Naturalist

(See program details on page 2.)

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details on page 3.)

September

Wednesday, 5th Moss Landing

**Sunday, 16th Ellis Creek Water
Recycling Facility**

**Saturday, 22nd Beaches of San
Mateo County**

October

**Wednesday, 3rd Warm up for the
Big Sit**

Thursday, 4th Hawk Hill

**Sunday, 14th Annual Big Sit,
Pescadero Marsh**

Saturday, 20th Filoli Estate

**Sunday, 28th Ellis Creek Water
Recycling Facility**

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MEETING PROGRAMS

How the Brain Identifies Birds – Birding ID Like a Pro

By Alvaro Jaramillo

Thursday, September 13, 7:00 PM

Most bird identification lectures focus on field marks and the specifics of separating species A from species B. But few ask exactly how we identify birds? What is our brain going through in order to do this? How does our brain get tripped up during bird identification – ever encountered the

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)

“leaf bird,” the “branch bird,” or the worse one of all, “the plastic bag snowy owl?” Why do experts identify birds almost without thinking, while the rest of us need to struggle? Are they different than the rest of us, or are there tricks? Truth is that bird identification is pretty tricky stuff but our brain is wired to shortcut much of the thinking involved in doing it. The trick is training yourself to do it like a pro. And that is the aim of this presentation -- a lighthearted but informative explanation of how the heck they do it.

Alvaro Jaramillo was born in Chile but began birding in Toronto, Canada, where he lived as a youth. He was trained in ecology and evolution with a particular interest in bird behavior. Research forays and backpacking trips introduced Alvaro to the riches of the Neotropics, where he has traveled extensively. He is the author of The Birds of Chile, an authoritative yet portable field guide to Chile's birds. Alvaro writes the "Identify Yourself" column in "Bird Watcher's Digest". He recently finished part of the sparrow chapter for the Handbook of Birds of the World, and is writing a photo guide to the birds and wildlife of Patagonia. He runs a birding and nature tour company, Alvaro's Adventures, where the focus is to have fun, learn a thing or two, and truly enjoy nature. Alvaro lives with his family in Half Moon Bay, California.

India – Birds, Tigers and the Taj

By Bob and Sue Cossins

Thursday, October 11, 7:00 PM

Many of you have already seen Bob Cossins' photos, which feature places like Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands, Chile, and Panama, during previous SAS programs. This hour-long presentation relives Bob and Sue's February, 2012, two-week tour of Northern India. Highlights of the trip include seeing over 350 species of birds and 20 species of mammals, including Bengal Tiger and Indian Elephant. Visiting the very picturesque UNESCO World Heritage Site, Taj Mahal, was unforgettable. Also on the tour were fellow SAS members Leslie Flint, Irene Contreras, and Pati Rouzer.

To see some of Bob's images check out his website: www.bobcossinsphoto.smugmug.com



Machli, Female Bengal Tiger,
Ranthambhor, NP, India
Photo by Bob Cossins

Thinking Like a Naturalist: Reclaiming the Art of Natural History

By John Muir Laws

Thursday, November 8, 7:00 PM

Learn how to get more out of every nature ramble. Developments in neuropsychology have opened doors in our understanding of the brain and cognition and how you can train yourself to see more and to be more curious about what you discover. Naturalist and illustrator John Muir Laws will demonstrate simple and fun techniques you can incorporate into your own recreational nature study or to share with others. A perfect experience for naturalists, teachers, home school parents, and anyone interested in taking their birding and nature study to the next level.

FIELD TRIPS

BY GINNY MARSHALL

Leslie Flint will lead a field trip on the first Wednesday of every month to places we may not normally bird and not necessarily in San Mateo County. For all trips carpooling is preferred. Contact Leslie (lflint@earthlink.net) to arrange if a carpool location is not already suggested. Rain cancels trips.

Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough Wednesday, September 5, 8:30 AM - 3:00 P.M.

This all-day trip will explore some of Monterey County's best fall birding hot spots. We will plan to bird at Moss Landing, Moon Glow Dairy, Zmudowsky State Beach, and other spots as we have time. Meet at 7:00 AM at the Park & Ride at Hwy 280 and Woodside Road if you want to carpool, OR meet at 8:30 AM at the last parking lot on the left at the far end of Jetty Road off Hwy 1 in Moss Landing.

Directions: From San Mateo, take Hwy 280 south to Hwy 17 west to Santa Cruz. Take Hwy 1 south to Moss Landing (note the PG&E chimneys) and turn right on Jetty Road. Plan to have lunch with the group at a great local seafood restaurant.

Leader: Leslie Flint (lflint@earthlink.net)

Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility, Petaluma, CA Sunday, September 16, 9:00 AM Sunday, October 28, 9:00 AM

This is one of our newest favorite places. Adjacent to Shollenberger Park, Ellis Creek is a water recycling facility that has attracted many birds. On our first visit last December, we had 45 species including 53 Common Moorhens. Each subsequent visit has been a surprise. We will meet at 9:00 AM in the main parking lot, next to the restrooms, marked on this map as B: <http://www.petalumawetlandspark.org/HTML/elliscreek.html>. Bring water, snacks, lunch (or spend birder money in Petaluma!), scopes, and a couple of layers of clothing.

Directions: Take Highway 101 north to Highway 116, the Lakeville Highway. Go east about 1 mile to South McDowell Blvd. You will pass the entrance to Shollenberger Park. After about 3/4 mile, McDowell will curve left. Take

Cypress Drive instead directly into the facility, and turn left for the parking area. Please carpool! To participate in a carpool, use <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SequoiaAudubon/>. While we don't normally take reservations for field trips, it will help if we know you are coming, so that we can wait until everyone arrives.

Leaders: Laurie Graham and Jeff Fairclough. Laurie Graham 650-589-2133, fair80@comcast.net. On the day, call my cell at 650-438-3417.

San Gregorio and Other Beaches of San Mateo County Saturday, September 22, 8:00 AM -- Noon

This trip will explore the under-birded State Beaches of the San Mateo Coast: San Gregorio and Pomponio. We can expect to see pelagic birds, migrants, shorebirds, marsh birds, and more. We will also stop in briefly at Pescadero Marsh if there are recent sightings of interest. Car-pooling encouraged; bring a State Park Pass, or pay the State Park Day Use Fee. Heavy rain cancels.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot of San Gregorio State Beach, at the junction of SR 1 and SR 84 at 8:00 AM sharp.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga 650-440-0063 or email gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net

Pescadero and Environs – Warm up for the BIG SIT! Wednesday, October 3, 8:30 AM -- 2:00 PM

Get ready for the Big Sit (October 14) by spending the morning on the coast identifying seabirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl that may be present off the coast and in the marshes of Pescadero. We'll do some land-birding as well, maybe checking out Gazos Creek and Butano and Cloverdale Roads. Be prepared to hike to the Big Sit hot spot to see what we can see from there.

Directions: Drive south on Hwy 1 from Hwy 92 to the Pescadero parking lot entrance just after you cross over the bridge. Drive to the northernmost section of the lot where we will meet.

Leader: Leslie Flint (lflint@earthlink.net)

(Field Trips continued on page 4)

Field Trips, continued

November

**Wednesday, 7th Las Gallinas Wildlife
Ponds**



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

(Field Trips continued from page 3)

Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands

Thursday, October 4, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

There has been an official raptor count in the Marin Headlands for more than 25 years. Peak migration lasts from mid-September through mid-October. Robbie Fischer has been a Hawkwatch volunteer for ten years. We will enjoy the spectacle and attempt to identify raptors as they fly by Hawk Hill. Here is the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory website for additional background: <http://ggro.org/>.

Directions: Cross the Golden Gate Bridge and take the second exit, Alexander Avenue. Get in the left lane following signs that read “101 San Francisco.” Turn left at the stop sign and cross under the freeway. Turn right onto Conzelman Road and drive 1.8 miles to Hawk Hill. Park alongside the road at the top of the hill, just before the road becomes one way. Walk up the west side of Hawk Hill past the locked gate. It’s just a few hundred feet to the summit. Bring binoculars, lunch, and a chair if you like.

Leader: Robbie Fischer robbie22@pacbell.net

The 18th Annual Big Sit – Pescadero Marsh Sunday, October 14, all day, dawn to dusk.

This annual event will feature a Sequoia Audubon team, The SASsy Seawatchers, spending the day birdwatching and fundraising. Join us as we indulge in the birding equivalent of a tailgate party, stationed atop the hill overlooking the North Pond. The Big Sit is an annual birding event in which teams across the world station themselves in one 17-foot diameter area and see how many species they can see and hear in a day from within the circle. People can come and go from the circle, so in addition to birding, we will have an ongoing party. Please stop by and join us in this madcap adventure. For more information, contact Jennifer Rycenga at smcbgeditor@earthlink.net.

The SASsy ones will be in place before dawn. There will be a dedicated team birding there all day, but anyone is welcome to stop by for a few hours or minutes to help the cause. We hope to detect between 60 and 80 species, but the sky’s the limit! Whether you can make it or not, please pledge an amount to Sequoia Audubon or to an individual counter, either as a flat amount, or as a per species amount, as this event will be a fundraiser for Sequoia.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga smcbgeditor@earthlink.net
Visit: <http://birding.sequoia-audubon.org/> The San Mateo County Birding Guide

Filoli Estate, Woodside

Saturday, October 20, 8:30 AM -- noon

Filoli Estate is the property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We have been invited for a morning of birding at this beautiful site on the edge of the San Francisco watershed land. The grounds of Filoli have a beautiful formal garden surrounded by large oaks and trails leading to riparian, redwood and farm habitats. Over 96 species of birds have been found here. Reservations required because this trip is limited to 20 people maximum (sorry, no children under 14). Participants may remain after the field trip to walk through the house and/or formal gardens at no charge. No food or picnicking is allowed but light food and beverages at the Café are available for purchase and the gift shop will be open.

Directions: Take Hwy 280 to the Edgewood Road exit; go west. Turn right/north on Canada Road and drive approximately one mile to the entrance of Filoli. We will meet in front of the Visitors Center. Heavy rain cancels.

Leaders: Sue James and Donna Petersen
Call Sue James (650) 348-0315 to reserve your spot.

Las Gallinas Wildlife Ponds, San Rafael

Wednesday, November 7, ½ day trip, 8:30 AM - Noon

Las Gallinas Ponds provide an opportunity to study ducks, geese, and raptors. There is always something interesting to see and over 100 species have been reported here over the course of a year. Beginner birders are especially welcome on this trip.

Directions: From San Mateo take the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway 101 to the Smith Ranch Road exit just north of San Rafael; go east toward the McInnis Park entrance. Turn left immediately after crossing the railroad tracks and go the end of the road to the Las Gallinas Storage Ponds parking lot. Meet the group by the bridge just past the parking lot. Carpooling encouraged.

Leader: Leslie Flint (lfint@earthlink.net)

PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

BY JENNIFER RYCENGA

Members of Sequoia Audubon range from trained ornithologists to backyard gardeners to high school students. What we share are life-enhancing and joyful experiences with birds. With the excitement of fall migration approaching, it is time to ask ourselves, what can we give back? What will it take for each of us, and our club, to ensure the presence and health of birds into the future? What can our local Audubon do to encourage the next generations to be engaged with birds? One easy answer to these questions is: Volunteer to join a Sequoia Audubon committee! Sequoia Audubon Society has an active Education Committee.

This summer we helped to host Girl Scouts at Butano State Park, and we are preparing for classroom visits and other projects to encourage youngsters to notice the birds around them. The Education Committee could benefit from your energy, insights, and ideas: volunteer today!

The old slogan – Think Globally, Act Locally – holds true for everything that a local Audubon like Sequoia does. We are involved in myriad local environmental situations, always seeking to preserve and extend habitat for local birds. We need your expertise to strengthen and grow our Environmental Committee. You can reinvigorate your concern for the environment and help protect the open space that makes San Mateo county such an attractive place to live.

A small organization like Sequoia Audubon Society depends on people like you, our members, to volunteer and keep the organization vibrant. We have been a positive force for good in San Mateo County since 1949: your participation extends that record!

OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

(Sequoia Audubon does not sponsor the following activities.)

Birding Classes

Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by the Golden Gate Audubon Society will be starting September 12 and 13. All classes meet from 7:00 – 9:15 PM in room 218 at City College of San Francisco, John Adams Campus. Free parking is in the school lot adjacent to the building at 1860 Hayes Street.

To register online: <https://www.evolveu.com/ce.ccsf/>

Joe Morlan's CA Birding Pages: <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan/index.htm>

Golden Gate Raptor Observatory Public Programs Weekends in September and October

Hawk Talks and Banding Demonstrations normally occur every Saturday and Sunday during September and October, weather permitting (heavy fog or rain cancels). The Hawk Talk begins at noon - a GGRO volunteer speaks about hawk migration and identification, and what is done at the GGRO. Then at 1:00 PM a banding volunteer brings up a newly banded hawk, talks about the banding program, shows everyone the hawk, and lets it go in front of the crowd. It is a great way to learn about hawks and see one up close.

You do not have to RSVP – just show up on the hill. Look for the big banner just west of the main hawk watching platform on the very top of Hawk Hill. The docent will gather everyone by announcing that the talk will begin in a few minutes. We recommend that you arrive at Hawk Hill around 11:30, watch some hawks, listen to the talk, then stay longer or not, depending on the hawks.

For information: www.ggro.org

2012 Monterey Bay Birding Festival, Watsonville Civic Plaza Thursday – Sunday, September 13 – 16

The Big Year birder, Greg Miller, is the Keynote Speaker at the Monterey Bay Birding Festival.

Greg Miller is portrayed by actor Jack Black in the new comedy movie *The Big Year* about the world of competitive birding.

For information: www.montereybaybirding.org

18th Annual Kern River Valley Autumn Nature & Vulture Festival

Kern River Preserve, Weldon, CA

Saturday, September 29

The Kern River Valley Autumn Nature & Vulture Festival is an annual celebration of the fall migration of Turkey Vultures and the beginning of the fall season in the South Fork Kern River forest. The late September festival date also corresponds with what is historically one of the finest weekends for observing fall land bird migration in California. In addition to the presence of many western migrants attractive to eastern birders, there are excellent chances for observing eastern rarities at nearby desert oases. Look for the free booths, exhibits, and workshops at the Kern River Preserve as well as nature walks.

For information: <http://kern.audubon.org/tvfest.htm>

37th Annual Conference of Western Field Ornithologists (WFO)

Petaluma, CA

Wednesday – Sunday, September 26 – 30

Please register soon because events are filling quickly. Why? Because there's a great line-up of speakers, field trips, and workshops!

Contact: <http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php>

35th Annual North American Bluebird Society (NABS) Conference

Newport Beach, CA

Thursday – Saturday, October 4 – 6

A BETTER WORLD FOR BLUEBIRDS IS A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL. Come and enjoy the beaches and bring your children. You will be bused to great birding sites where experts will guide you. Keynote speaker, Laura Erickson, will give a presentation on "How Birds Learn."

www.laurierickson.com/radio/podcasts/FTB.html.

Steve Simmons from Flying M Ranch, Merced, CA, will talk about his work with nine species of cavity nesting birds. Watch his video on You Tube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9vHwGF6VXw>

Registration forms and more information:

www.nabluebirdsociety.org or www.socalbluebirds.org

16th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival

Hutchins Street Square, Lodi, CA

Friday – Sunday, November 2 – 4

Viewings of the state's largest concentration of greater Sandhill Cranes; workshops, exhibits, children stories, dancing, face painting, live wild animals and fine art.

For information: <http://www.cranefestival.com/index.html> or 800-581-6150

2012 Christmas Bird Counts

Save these dates:

Crystal Springs – Saturday, December 15th

Ano Nuevo – Saturday, December 29th

get our bait. It is not unusual to have one weak pelican about that makes a scene, but it was like a slow motion version of the movie *The Birds* for us, with five to six flying at us for the bait! Then there was the one walking around the fields inland from the harbor that my wife saw, and the other hanging about near the Rite Aid in Half Moon Bay. In 15 or so years living in Half Moon Bay, I have never seen anything like it. The official story currently, at least what is being reported in the papers, is that the pelicans had a great breeding year, a fantastic one, and this boom of kids is just too big and we are seeing a higher than usual level of mortality in this first year. So in a sense this is a good thing: the birds are doing well as a population, breeding en masse, resulting in this sad reality of pelican life. I think that some of this may well be the case.

Brown Pelicans were doing very poorly decades ago; they were listed due to the problems they faced from DDT issues and many years of failed or low breeding. Their populations have rebounded and indeed there have been some seasons where breeding has been fantastic! However there have been years when breeding has been better than this one, and we did not see such a dramatic die off. What gives?

This is a striking event, where even non-birders are noting how odd the pelicans are acting, and many folks are finding pelicans in need of rescue. It can't all be due to just a good breeding season, can it? Some have said that this type of event might indicate that a warm water El Niño event is coming – but if the pelicans can tell, shouldn't we be able to measure that already?

Fishermen in the harbor and elsewhere on the coast have mentioned that forage fish are around but patchily, not as predictable as in other years. Could this be affecting the fish and therefore the pelicans? How about sea lions; what is going on with them? These animals along with Common Murres and Brandt's Cormorants are being tracked, studied, and surveyed. The data is not complete though, because the breeding season is not yet finished.

The thought I have had and the point of this article is that we, as birders and as members of Sequoia Audubon Society, want to know what is going on. We would like to believe that whatever story these pelicans are telling us, someone out there is going to figure it out. Maybe, maybe not and that is the scary thing to me.

What this pondering about the pelicans has told me is that there is more to conservation than reacting to development or alteration of habitat. For the most part much of the conservation we are involved in at the county level is reactive to events that occur. Yes, we help to preserve land as well, but what about including science and the support of science in our conservation strategies? We need to become proactive asking for answers! I, we, want to know what is going on with pelicans. We want scientists, birders, and anyone monitoring fish, marine mammals, and ocean birds to put their brains together and answer not just the questions mandated by endangered species laws, or environmental review but also to answer the questions that are bothering us, the public. But the only way we can have that say is to support science in whatever way we can. Make it clear to scientists and politicians what questions we as nature enthusiasts want to have answered. We must make sure we support local bird observatories and citizen science projects. Sometimes this just means getting out in the field. Participate in e-bird, Beach Watch, and CBCs, and support university research programs, our local marine reserves, and the politics and policies out there that are pro-science. Science is a tool, but it is our tool, and only when we take ownership of questions, demand information and support the process as birders can we then get answers to what we are interested in and what we know is necessary for the health of our native birds!

And while we are at it maybe someone can do a study on what birdseed brings in the nicest birds; why that mockingbird sings at 1:00 AM, and how come the right tide for shorebirds never happens when you have free time to visit Radio Road!!



Painted Stork adult and juvenile,
Bharatpur, India.

Photo by Bob Cossins

SAS News

“Vanishing Birds” Art Exhibit by Rita Sklar

Co-sponsored by the Sequoia Audubon Society

Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, Goldman Sports & Wellness Complex Lobby, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto, CA
August 3 – October 26

Award-winning artist Rita Sklar uses her art to express appreciation for the uniqueness and beauty of each species of birds. She draws attention to the decline in bird populations and urges her audiences to take better care of our planet.

Please attend a free reception on Sunday, October 21, 4:00 – 6:00 PM, with refreshments and guest speaker Jennifer Rycenga, president of the Sequoia Audubon Society. She will talk about our organization’s programs to protect the birds of San Mateo County.

Information: <http://www.paloaltojcc.org/events/2012/10/21/cultural-arts/closing-reception-vanishing-birds-by-rita-sklar/>

To schedule a viewing please call (650) 223-8699 or email boxoffice@paloaltojcc.org

See Rita’s paintings at “<http://www.ritasklar.com>”

Conservation

Smartest (and Easiest) Home Improvement: Save money and help the planet keep its cool by putting solar panels on your roof.

Contact: www.sierraclub.org/solar

Save the Bay

Please sign up to join Save the Bay’s online community and support their efforts to secure a clean and healthy San Francisco Bay for people and wildlife. By signing up you will receive their free monthly e-newsletter as well as breaking news and notices of urgent action opportunities when they need your help. (Save The Bay will never share your email address.)

Contact: <https://www.savesfbay.org/secure/bay-updates-signup>

Get the Lead Out – Fighting to Save Condors

The 2007 ban on the use of lead bullets in California Condor habitat has had little effect. Birds analyzed after the law took effect had levels of lead in their blood that was the same as birds analyzed previously. The Center for Biological Diversity is coming at the issue from all sides to get poisonous lead out of the environment -- not just in condor habitat but across the country, for the sake of all wildlife. To learn more about how you can help with the Center for Biological Diversity’s Get the Lead Out campaign go to: www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/get_the_lead_out/index.html.



Thanks to our SAS Volunteers Volunteer Appreciation Day, Sunday, May 6, 2012

After birding the San Francisco Botanical Garden with leader, Ginny Marshall, a group of 19 active SAS volunteers were treated to a behind the scenes tour of the Ornithology Department of the Cal Academy. During the tour we were amazed to see skins of all 17 Darwin Finches from their 1906 expedition to the Galapagos Islands. Lunch in the Moss Room and free access to the academy topped off the day. SAS really appreciates volunteers!

Photo by Melissa Hero.

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Woodside, CA
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**It's that time of year
again!**

**Enclosed is our Yearly
Appeal form.**

**We sincerely appreciate
your donation to keep
SAS going.**

West Nile Virus Update

(Excerpted from the *San Jose Mercury News*, July 24, 2012)

The West Nile virus was detected in the body of a gray squirrel found in Menlo Park earlier this month, a vector control official announced July 23. A hawk also tested positive for the virus in June, said Angie Nakano, a vector ecologist with San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control.

Transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, the West Nile virus tends to flare up between the spring and fall, Nakano said, adding that "the virus and mosquitoes multiply faster when it's warmer".

The county's two recent animal infections are cause for concern, but not panic, Nakano said. The agency has not disclosed the neighborhoods where the infected animals were found. Although humans can be infected by the potentially deadly disease, there have been no reported human cases in San Mateo County since the first case in 2005.

Of the 3,146 people infected since 2004 by the West Nile virus in California, 110 have died from the disease, according to the California Department of Public Health's website. There have been six reports of human infections in 2012, but no fatalities to date. Statewide this year, West Nile virus has been found in 593 mosquito pools, 432 dead birds, and 19 chickens. The squirrel found in Menlo Park was the first one in California determined to have contracted West Nile virus, according to state data posted on July 20.

Precautions should be taken to avoid mosquito bites, including eliminating sources of standing water, wearing repellent in areas with a lot of mosquitoes, and staying covered or inside during dawn and dusk, according to the agency. Residents frequently bitten by mosquitoes around their home or elsewhere should contact the district at 650-344-8592.

Reports of dead birds are an early indication that the virus is circulating in the environment. Residents are encouraged to help by reporting fresh carcasses of birds or tree squirrels to the West Nile virus hotline, online at www.westnile.ca.gov or by phone at 877-WNV-BIRD (877-968-2473).

Note to subscribers: 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.

Bay Area Birding Events:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/birding-events>

Sialia:

<http://digest.sialia.com//region=2>

Penbird:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peninsula-birding>

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.