Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County Founded 1949 Volume 69, No. 3 July - September 2018

Sequoia is Soaring by Jennifer Rycenga, President

You, our members, have made Sequoia Audubon Society into one of the premier Audubon chapters in California! Here, in the midst of the bustling Bay Area, we've built a cadre of birdwatchers, conservationists, and citizen-scientists who are determined to make a difference, and have fun doing it! There's a lot to be proud of among our recent achievements.

We continue to be a regional leader in sponsoring Bioblitzes, including this spring's

venture into the upper regions of San Bruno Mountain State and County Park. With almost 2000 observations, and 285 species of all taxa recorded, this was among the most successful and prodigious Bioblitzes in the history of the partnership between San Mateo County Parks and Sequoia Audubon (joined by many other organizations and allies).

Field trips form the life-blood of Sequoia. Under the capable leadership of



Wilson's Warbler photo by Donna Pomeroy

Field chair, Adam Dudley, we've had some innovative new approaches, including more overnight, out-of-area trips and exploring new areas in our county. Our Facebook page contains summaries of most past trips, as well as announcements of what is upcoming (you can find that on our website, too). Get involved, either as a participant or as a leader (it's not hard to do...). Go and explore amazing places with friendly, knowledgeable people!

Sequoia Audubon is in coalition with other Audubon societies, and recently hosted the quarterly meeting of the Bay Area Audubon Council (BAAC). These meetings are fascinating opportunities to understand issues that affect the entire Bay region, and to become more involved in conservation and community – and they are open to everyone, regular members as well as board members.

The programs at our regular monthly meetings have been of the highest quality over the past few years, thanks to Leslie Flint, our out-going program chair. Look for some favorites in the fall, including Alvaro Jaramillo, Joe Morlan, and William Shakespeare!

Monthly Meetings

2nd Thursdays 7:00 pm San Mateo Garden Center 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

September 13

Winter in Japan Alvaro Jamarillo

Upcoming Field Trips

July

Sat. 7th Fort Funston Fri. 27th Mono Lake

<u>August</u>

Sat. 11th Pillar Point Harbor
Sun. 12th Edgewood Park
Sat. 18th Pillar Point Bluffs

Bluffs*September*

Sun. 9th Edgewood Park

Tues. 18th Hawk Hill
Wed. 19th Moss Landing

Sat. 22nd Old La Honda OSP

Fri. 28th Sweetwood Camp etc.

Our new Tabling committee has been representing Sequoia far and wide, from the California Academy of Science's NightLife to the Town of Woodside's Open Space Committee meeting. For the second year, we've had a presence at the San Mateo County Fair. Tell your friends and neighbors about Sequoia, and be a part of our outreach through the Tabling Committee, chaired by Doug Brown.

There have also been somber occasions recently, most notably the loss of long-time member and birding legend Barry Sauppe. But once again, Sequoia members stepped up, with Leonie Batkin and Malia DeFelice sponsoring a memorial gathering in late April. Sequoia Audubon has now started an *In Memoriam* page on our website for notable members who've winged on to the realm of celestial birding.

There is much more that we could be doing at Sequoia. There are conservation battles to be waged (see article on p. 2), more field trips to be scheduled, plenty of website updates and history to write. We have one of the best birding communities in the country. It will only get better as YOU get more involved and help us expand! It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as the President of Sequoia for six of the past seven years. It is time for Sequoia to have new leadership and a renewed vision. Step up and let your voice be part of shaping a future filled with bird song in San Mateo county!

City Nature Challenge 2018: The Golden State Eco-Warriors Win by Jennifer Rycenga

The City Nature Challenge is a new friendly-competitive environmental contest between metropolitan areas. Started in 2016 as a two-way rivalry battle between the Bay Area and Los Angeles, the first City Nature Challenge got many people out into the field to record as many species of all life forms as they could, entering their sightings using the iNaturalist data base. Amidst all the playful trash-talking between the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles and the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, one thousand people participated, recording over 2,700 species. And yet, inexplicably, Los Angeles won!

This ignominy could not stand, and so a City Nature Challenge for 2017 was called. Other cities had noticed how much fun we were having in California, and so the competition was expanded to sixteen metropolitan areas across the United States. Now 4,000-plus observers documented 8,800 species, and the competition was fierce! Inexplicably, the Texas teams swept the prize round! And this, despite massive participation from Sequoia Audubon Society members! What was going on?

When 2018 rolled around, the Bay Area got serious. There were strategy meetings, field trips planned, and Bioblitzes scheduled (including Sequoia's at San Bruno Mountain) for the last weekend in April. But there was a new unpredictable wrinkle: the competition had gone international. What would Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur be able to reach in terms of species or participants? We decided to be relentless locally – and it worked! The Bay Area swept all three categories. The joy of it is that with citizen-science, everyone is a winner,



and science most of all: thousands of species were added to the iNaturalist data base; the effort to confirm sightings (the only way they would count) brought many experts to examine the positive growth of citizen-science, and gave iNaturalist its largest four-day use totals ever. SIXTY-THREE cities, with 16,500 participants, recorded over 18,000 species.

And the Bay Area was the best of 'em all!

Thanks to the outstanding citizen-science team from California Academy of Sciences, Rebecca Johnson and Alison Young; Ranger Katherine Wright, who organizes the joint Bioblitzes for the San Mateo County Parks; the many intrepid Sequoia members involved, including Donna Pomeroy (a leader in many categories), Doug Pomeroy, Leslie Flint, Mary Nguyen, Ed Miller, Davena Gentry, Carol Masterson, and more; and those who will continue the Bay Area string in future City Nature Challenges!

Environmental Action by Marshall Dinowitz

The Conservation Committee has been monitoring various local issues that impact our environment, and the environment of birds. Working with other organizations, we provide input to government bodies with a focus on birds and wildlife habitat.

Over the last year, we have worked on access to some Redwood Shores locations. Leslie Flint has been discussing the habitat threats to the Foster City shell bar and has been successful in getting a commitment to erect educational signage at the sensitive area to protect birds along the shore.

We provided education and protection information regarding the valuable habitat at Bedwell-Bayfront Park in Menlo Park. We were part of a successful effort to protect this habitat due in part to the efforts of Chris MacIntosh, Friends of Bedwell-Bayfront, and other environmental groups. We provided input to the Menlo Park City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

We have been working with the Burlingame City Council to ensure that proposed high-rise buildings will be developed with bird safety as part of the architecture. This principle has been adopted by other nearby cities. Also in Burlingame, we have been providing input to the state commission to protect one of the last remaining undeveloped shore areas.

Our SAS Conservation Committee is currently working with the San Mateo Harbor District Wildlife Protection Committee to ensure habitat protection in areas under the Harbor District jurisdiction.

Other activities during the last year include testifying before the San Francisco City Council and Parks and Recreation Dept. to protect two areas in San Mateo County owned by San Francisco. The Sharp Park golf course includes habitat that includes endangered species, and the Crystal Springs watershed is considering access issues.

We are working with the Sanitary District regarding developing an alternate habitat to replace the wonderful Radio Road ponds that were lost due to construction of the expanded facility.

As you can see, there are many activities to protect birds and wildlife habitat that the committee is working on, and we will continue to do so. If you are interested in joining, please contact us.



Fort Funston to Thornton Dune Beach walk Saturday, July 7, 7:30 am - 12:00 pm

Sequoia Audubon and Nature in the City will co-sponsor a beach and dune walk, starting at Fort Funston in San Francisco and walking to Thornton Beach State Park in Daly City. This unprecedented field trip will focus on the Bank Swallows at Fort Funston, then walk south along the beach and dunes into San Mateo county. Sign up at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/beaches-and-bank-swallows-tickets-46917846542 and be part of this inaugural hike. We meet at 7:30 at Ft. Funston, and the hike will be over at noon at Thornton, with shuttle back to parking area at Ft. Funston. Donations requested. **Leader:** Jennifer Rycenga. **Contact:** gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net.

Mono Lake Basin & Eastern Sierra Slope (TRIP FULL WITH WAITLIST) Friday, July 27 – Sunday, July 29

Join us for our annual field trip to the Eastern Sierra and Mono Lake. On Friday afternoon we'll meet at a site in Yosemite to look for Pine Grosbeak, before driving to our accommodations in Mammoth Lakes. A quick turnaround will take us out for an early supper before an optional evening trip to search for Common Poorwill and Common Nighthawk. On Saturday we'll start at dawn, heading east into the local canyons to look for the special birds of the region including Sagebrush Sparrow, Plumbeous Vireo, Juniper Titmouse, Green-tailed Towhee, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Mountain Quail, Pinyon Jay, and multitudes of desert sparrows. After lunch.we'll escape the heat by working our way into the Sierra looking for woodpeckers (White-headed, Black-backed, and Hairy), flycatchers (Dusky, Gray), Thick-billed Fox Sparrow, Dusky Grouse, and other mountain specialties. Sunday morning will also start early and at high elevation, looking for Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, Williamson's and Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Red Crossbills and other high-altitude species. We'll end our time together in the high Sierra by having brunch/lunch at a nearby resort with feeders and gardens that attract high-altitude species including Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadee and Clark's Nutcracker. This trip is limited to 14 participants. To be added to the waitlist, contact Adam Dudley at Adam.Dudley@iCloud.com.

Pillar Point Harbor

Saturday, August 11, 8:00 am -11:00 am

Pillar Point is a hot spot for birding year-round. We should find an interesting variety of birds. Most of the walking will be on a fairly level dirt trail, but if time permits, we may hike up onto the bluff top for a better view out to sea. Scopes will be useful here, so if you have one, bring it along. A primitive restroom is available at the parking lot. **Directions:** The harbor is located just west of Coast Highway One, 18 miles south of San Francisco and 4 miles north of Half Moon Bay. From Highway One, turn west at the stoplight at Capistrano Rd. and continue along the north side of the harbor to Prospect Way. Turn left onto Prospect, then a brief jog right on Broadway, to an immediate left on Harvard Ave. Proceed through the boatyards to the end of Harvard Ave., then turn right onto West Point Ave., which curves around a marshy area and heads uphill to an Air Force Radar Facility. Meet at the "West Shoreline Access" parking lot, popularly known as the parking lot to Mavericks, just below the radar station. **Leader:** Donna Pomeroy. **Contact:** dpom@comcast.net.

Edgewood County Park from Clarkia Trailhead Sunday, August 12, 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Explore this gem of a park while hiking 3-6 miles through oak woodlands, some hills and natural meadows. Look for California Thrasher, Wrentit, Oak Titmouse and Western Bluebird year-round. **Directions:** Take 280 to Edgewood Rd. Go west down Edgewood; turn south on Cañada Road and go 2/3 of a mile to the Clarkia Trailhead. **Leader:** Susie Hons. **Contact:** susieturtlewings@mac.com.

"Bilingual" Pillar Point Bluffs

Saturday, August 18, 8:00 am - 11:00 pm

Join us for our inaugural bilingual (Spanish) birding trip, led by State Park interpreter Alan Mata. The Bluffs at Pillar Point are an excellent place to get to know local common birds as well as look for early migrants. Resident sparrows, thrashers, finches and hummingbirds are joined by terns, cormorants, shorebirds and murres on the ocean. Sooty Shearwaters could be numerous, returning Elegant Terns and Heerman's Gulls could put in an appearance, and the chance of humpback whales close in to shore make for a potentially exciting morning! This trip is especially suitable for beginner birders and naturalists. **Directions**: Meet at Pillar Point Bluff parking lot, along Airport Street in Half Moon Bay, directly opposite the Half Moon Bay airport. **Leader:** Alan Mata. RSVP: https://mbinterpreter@parks.ca.gov.

Check our website and Facebook page for updates and new listings.

Edgewood County Park from Education Center

Sunday, September 9, 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Explore this gem of a park while hiking 3-6 miles through oak woodlands, some hills and natural meadows. Look for California Thrasher, Wrentit, Oak Titmouse & Western Bluebird year-round. **Directions:** Take 280 to Edgewood Rd. Go east down Edgewood about 1 mile to the park entrance on the right. Meet at the Education Center. **Leader:** Susie Hons. **Contact:** susieturtlewings@mac.com.

Hawk Hill - Marin Headlands

Tuesday, September 18, 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. Tour guide and Hawkwatch enthusiast Rich Cimino has been coming to this site for over for ten years! We will enjoy the spectacle and attempt to identify raptors as they fly by Hawk Hill. The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory has additional background. **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. 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. **Leader:** Rich Cimino. **Contact:** robbie22@ pacbell.net.

Moss Landing/Elkhorn Slough; RSVP REQUIRED

Wednesday, September 19, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

This trip will explore some of Monterey County's best fall birding hotspots. We will plan to bird at Moss Landing, Moon Glow Dairy, Zmudowsky State Beach, and other spots as we have time. Plan to have lunch with the group at a great local seafood restaurant. Contact the leader to reserve a space and for carpooling and directions info. **Leader:** Leslie Flint. **Contact:** lflint@earthlink.net.

La Honda Creek OSP

Saturday, September 22, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm, No-host carpooling encouraged

La Honda Creek OSP is one of the newest preserves in San Mateo County, but it has quickly become established as a favorite among the birders who go there regularly. Join leader Joshua Stacy, who birds this area almost every day, for this leisurely 4-mile round-trip hike. We will be searching the skies for migrating raptors, the grasslands for returning winter visitors, and the woodland along the hiking trail for migrating passerines. Bring your camera for extraordinary views, too! We will meet at the parking lot at the end of Sears Ranch Road in La Honda. **Leader:** Joshua Stacy. **Contact:** Joshua.g.stacy@gmail.com.

Beach Bluff Walk and Sweetwood Group Camp, Half Moon Bay Friday, September 28, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm; RSVP Required

This approximately 2.5 mi. loop walk will take us through Sweetwood Group Camp and along blufftop trails that overlook Dunes State Beach and Venice State Beach. Frenchman's Creek mouth and Pilarcitos Creek mouth will also be visited during our walk. Beginning Birders Welcome! **Directions:** Meet at the parking lot at Venice Beach State Park. Park at Venice State Beach for a \$10 fee (which can be used at any State Beach that day) or park free at the north end of Pilarcitos Ave., at Wave Ave. and on adjacent streets. If opting for free parking, walk towards the beach, where you will intersect with the paved coastal trail. Head north along the paved trail to the meet-up location at Venice State Beach. **Leaders:** Chris Hayward and Malia DeFelice. **RSVP**: malia.defelice.sas@gmail. com. If you are running late text or call 650-346-2009. **Please confirm if you intend to attend this field trip so we know to expect you or in case we need to cancel due to weather.**

MEETING PROGRAMS

San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

September 13, 2018, 7 pm "Winter Birding in Japan" with Alvaro Jaramillo

Japan is a large archipelago that stretches for a wide latitudinal gradient offshore from China, the Koreas and Russia. It is largely a mountainous country, with a chain of volcanoes and mountains that create a spine to the main islands. Japan reaches from sea level to over 12,000 feet at the top of Mt. Fuji, perhaps one of the world's most beautiful volcanoes. It is a gorgeous and unique country to visit, not only for the scenery, but the distinctive food and culture. Japan is a country that has shaped the world, one of the great civilizations of our planet.

But in Japan there is another side that one usually does not contemplate, and this is its natural world. If one word had to sum it up, it would be spectacle! Picture thousands upon thousands of Hooded and White-naped Cranes, rivaling the well-known version of this in the United States, at Bosque del Apache or along the Platte River. But in Japan there are various species of cranes. Farther north one can see the rare and beautiful Red-crowned Cranes, often dancing in the mist coming off the ice! Truly spectacular. Add to this the chance of seeing some rarer crane species and you get the idea that it is a very special place for these large, memorable and often endangered species of bird.

Also picture the spectacle of the largest fish eagle in the world, the Steller's Sea Eagle, and in numbers! This is without a doubt one you would include in the top five most impressive raptors on earth, with its huge beak, wonderful coloration, and that odd diamond-shaped tail. They come to the northern island of Hokkaido, and not only that they are surrounded by many White-tailed Sea Eagles. If you have seen those amazing photos of sea eagles, with a snowy background, they were taken here in the Japanese winter. Can you imagine that you can end a day here watching these eagles and then see the night shift? The largest owl in the world can show up if you are lucky (see image). In addition to the spectacle, are all of the smaller or lesser known birds of Japan, from Japanese Murrelets and Spectacled Guillemots, to a wide assortment of pretty waterfowl, buntings, Green Pheasant, and of course the myriad of wintering gulls.

This presentation will give you a sampling of Japan's winter wonderland for birds!

Alvaro Jaramillo, Seguoia Audubon's consulting biologist, runs Alvaro's Adventures, featuring international excursions as well as numerous pelagic trips out of Half Moon Bay. He also works with San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. His ornithological range is evident in his publications, spanning The Birds of California (ABA Guide), Birds of Chile, and New World Blackbirds: The Icterids.



Blakiston's Fish-Owl, illustration by J G Keulemans (1884, Public Domain)

Birding Burleigh Murray State Park by Donna Pomeroy

On Saturday, June 1, 2018, I led a field trip at Burleigh Murray State Park for Sequoia Audubon, using this gem of a park as a resource to help people learn the calls and songs of our local breeding birds. I cannot think of a better location in San Mateo County for practicing birding by ear. The abundance of breeders enables one to find a singing bird and then hear the same species multiple times as we progress up the trail. Repetition is key to learning the songs and calls.

Burleigh Murray provides a unique opportunity to compare similar looking birds such as Western Wood-Pewee and Olive-sided Flycatcher with very different songs and calls. During our field trip, we had both species using the same tree. While we debated the identification based on field marks, or lack of field marks, the birds helped us out by vocalizing. What a great learning tool!

Our late spring outing allowed us to view some recent fledglings, helping us learn some of the distinguishing features of juvenile birds. We saw newly-fledged Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Great Horned Owl. While some early nesters had



Olive-sided Flycatcher photo by Donna Pomeroy

already fledged their young, others were still in the process of nest-building. It was fascinating to watch an Olive-sided Flycatcher building its nest on an open branch, weaving lichens and spider webs into the base of the nest. We saw Pygmy Nuthatches and Violet-green Swallows flying in and out of nest holes in the same snag. Other birds were still advertising for a mate. High on the canyon hills, we heard MacGillivray's Warblers singing, a secretive species, but still a joy to hear.

One of the best things about Burleigh Murray is how little use it gets from the non-birding public. On a midweek hike, other people are few and far between. It is rare to be disturbed by another hiker or jogger or dogwalker, while trying to puzzle out a bird identification. The trail follows the old ranch road about a mile to the historic barn. It is not unusual for this mile-long hike to take three to four hours and yield 35-40 species of birds. On a sunny spring day, there is also an abundance of butterflies, with a dozen species or so flying about.



California Quail photo by Donna Pomeroy

Although this park does not charge an admission fee, I am happy to purchase an annual California State Parks Pass and know that some of my fee goes to keep this treasure of a park open and maintained. See you out on the trail!

Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine by Nelle Lyons

Summer Camp? For adults? Summer Camp for Birders! I had a great opportunity to attend a week at Hog Island Audubon Camp in May for their Spring Migration session. Hog Island is located on the coast of Maine north of Portland. I've known about Hog Island for a long time but my schedule never panned out. This year they added a new session and it all lined up so I could go.

Hog Island has a long history with Audubon – it became an Audubon Camp in 1936. They schedule numerous sessions over the summer with different themes. They bring in different leaders and speakers for each session. In addition to birding sessions for adults, they have a week for youth camp, a family week, and an educators week.



Hog Island May 2018 photo by N. Lyons

After we arrived on the island, we settled into rooms in several buildings. Our meals were served family style in the community dining room; this gave everyone a chance to talk with different leaders and birders at each meal. Our days were filled with birding on the mainland, boat trips out on the water, and hiking around the island. Leaders Mark Garland, Richard Crossley, and Holly Merker offered evening presentations on monarch butterfly migration, learning to look, and eBird usage. Stephen Kress gave a presentation on Project Puffin where I learned he was also involved in bringing back our own Common Murre colony at Devil's Slide Rock in San Mateo County.

Another treat during the migration session was an overnight trip to Monhegan Island. We found many warblers with other birds on the island and lots of waterbirds on our trip out and back. The Hog Island staff and volunteers took good care of all of us; they, along with the Friends of Hog Island, work hard to preserve this special place and experience. I added a number of birds to my life list and had good looks at birds in breeding plumage that I haven't seen before.

If you want a fun experience with great birding opportunities I recommend a week at Hog Island Audubon Camp. Remember when you are birding, wherever that might be, that we need to continue to do things for conservation. Conservation is never done. It is an ongoing effort to protect and preserve species' habitats and their connections to other things in our very complicated natural world. Take a trip to see something special. Take action to save something special.



Common Eider photo by N. Lyons

As Sequoia Audubon Society plans for the future, we want to ensure that our efforts align with the visions and goals of our members. Please give us your perspective on what to prioritize as an organization. Stay tuned for an email survey and short discussions at program meetings. In the meantime, we welcome any feedback by email to: office@sequoia-audubon.org.

OFFICERS

President: Open Vice President: Open

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At Large: Doug Brown, Marshall Dinowitz, Adam Dudley, John Epperson, Nelle Lyons, Chris MacIntosh, Doug Pomeroy, Jennifer Rycenga

Consulting Biologist

Alvaro Jaramillo

COMMITTEES

Bluebird Recovery

Chris O'Connell sequoiaaudubon@mail.com

Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

Al Demartini al_demar@yahoo.com Leslie Flint lflint@earthlink.net

Speakers Programs

Jennifer Rycenga smcbgeditor@earthlink.net

Conservation

Marshall Dinowitz marshall 2003@comcast.net Leslie Flint lflint@earthlink.net

Education

Nelle Lyons 650-515-9052

Field Trips

Adam Dudley adam.dudley@icloud.com

Hospitality

Laurie Graham greylag64@gmail.com

Membership Database

Susan Stratton needles@sequoia-audubon.org

Newsletter Editor

E-mail address

Chris O'Connell sequoiaaudubon@mail.com

Administrative Assistant

Chris O'Connell office@sequoia-audubon.com

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.

Sequoia Audubon Society

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Support our Chapter's Work - Donate

Please consider an extra donation to your chapter in support of the work we do to provide birding trips, monthly programs, monitoring conservation concerns around the county, education and outreach. *Thank you!*

Give a Gift Membership or in Recognition

Has someone inspired you, or just done something kind for the world or for the birds? A donation in recognition gives toward supporting our Chapter's work.

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We're looking for Volunteers! Get Involved! Take Action!

You can make a difference! How can you help? Join our team! For more information, email: office@sequoia-audubon.org

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If it doesn't have the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) Bird Friendly certification seal your money does not support farming practices that support resident and migratory birds. During our monthly public meetings Sequoia proudly serves Certified Bird Friendly coffee, 100% organic and shade grown from *Birds and Beans, The Good Coffee* (https://www.birdsandbeans.com) and generously donated for each monthly meeting by Susan Rowinski.

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or

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