



The Sequoia



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BULLETIN OF SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY, A BRANCH OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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MEETINGS:

JANUARY 4, THURSDAY 7:30 PM -- BOARD MEETING at the home of President Bergeron. Board members and committee chairpersons should attend. Other members welcome.

JANUARY 11, THURSDAY 8:00 p.m. -- REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING,
Roosevelt School, Broadway and Vancouver in Burlingame. Michael Peterhans will present a slide show, "Año Nuevo Island and its Marine Mammals." These color slides of this unique and fascinating San Mateo County island were taken by Mr. Peterhans over a five year period while he was associated with a Stanford Research Institute study of the behavioral aspects of the mammal populations. Año Nuevo is the northernmost rookery for elephant seals, the southernmost for Steller sea lions and is the residence of harbor seals, California sea lions and an occasional fur seal. Here is a fine opportunity for vicarious exploration of an island which most of us have seen many times but few, if any, have set foot on.

FIELD TRIPS:

JANUARY 13, SATURDAY -- San Mateo County Coastal Canyons

Meeting Place: Intersection of California State Highways 35 and 92 at the top of the hill.

Time: 8:00 AM.

Purisima, Higgins, Lobitos and Tunitas Creeks are the destinations for this trip. These canyons are always full of surprises for the birder and the botanist. Sparrows are in abundance, so please study your sparrow plates so you will be familiar with the field marks to look for and refer to the text for distributional information. Bring a quick bite to eat.

Leader: Mark Zumsteg (591-4332)

JANUARY 27, SATURDAY -- Lake Merrit, Oakland.

Meeting Place: The museum on the lake. (In Lakeside Park, not the new Oakland Museum.)

Time: 9:00 AM.

This trip is designed to be a wildfowl identification seminar. Lake Merritt provides us with a place to watch both common and rare ducks at very close range. Therefore I hope we will gather in small groups to discuss identification problems at various levels of technicality. This way everyone, from rank

beginner to "old hands" can add to his knowledge. Hopefully we will be having a trip to one of the very fine wildlife refuges nearby next month where we will be able to put this knowledge to use on more distant birds.

Leader: Since this is a "seminar and group discussion" there should be no need of a leader. If there are any questions I would be glad to answer them.

--Mark Zumsteg (591-4332)
Field Trip Chairperson

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Golden Gate Park -- Chain of Lakes -- November 25

The tule fog dissipated and the park weather was clear and calm as about 30 of us sharpened our estimating skills on a large group of coots, ducks and gulls. Our counts were rather variable but we'll all be magically more accurate at Christmas Count times. Distant buteos caused intricate discussions with the conservatives holding out for "immature red tails" and the bolder observers trying for Swainsons and other "goodies." All three nuthatches were present but the resident wood ducks were not. There were good sightings of Townsend's warblers, a "red breasted" sapsucker and several varied thrush. While we observed about 42 species, this is not a spectacular number for this location.

-- Byron Davies

CONSERVATION NOTES

Thanks to the help of Sequoia Audubon members and all the other helpers in the massive grass roots campaign against the original damaging provisions of A.B. 889, the bill went to the Governor in an amended form which (1) protects existing litigation over developments under the CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act), (2) cuts the moratorium to 120 days on application of the CEQA to private developments and allows local agencies to apply it at once if they wish, (3) guarantees public notice and participation in hearings, (4) gives better statutory standards and judicial review provisions, (5) protects the Coastal Zone Commissions, and (6) eliminates exemption of building and grading permits. This was not the ideal result that conservationists had hoped for -- complete defeat of 889 and passage of Assemblyman Priolo's bill, A.B. 304 -- but it is the best that could be passed under the circumstances. Opponents of CEQA will still be working to nullify its effectiveness, so continued vigilance is needed.

The foes of Proposition 20, who spent over \$ one million in their campaign, have not given up either. It is feared they also will be attempting through the courts and legislature, and in every possible other way, to get around its provisions. It particularly behooves those who voted for coastal protection to try to see that properly qualified members are appointed to the state and local Coastal Zone Commissions.

On the National scene, President Nixon has nullified Congress' action of overriding his veto of the clean water bill by refusing to release 50% of the funds authorized for sewage treatment facilities. This was done in the name of economy. But the "Audubon Leader" thinks such an economy is a false one, since if water pollution continues to worsen, in the end it will require more funding and higher taxes than if brought under control now. Funds are badly needed in this County for the upgrading of most of the sewage treatment plants to clean up both the Bay and Coastal waters.

-- Ruth Smith
Conservation Chairperson

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

National Audubon has recently switched to a new computer service system which will provide faster and more efficient service to both members and chapters and will also, of course, reduce costs thereby making more dollars available for Audubon purposes. Membership renewals are to be made by use of a punch card and a special business reply envelope directed to P.O.Box 5133. This envelope should be used for membership payments only -- not for other correspondence. National Audubon has asked our cooperation in following this new procedure carefully.

If you live somewhere outside of San Mateo County but would like to be affiliated with Sequoia Audubon Society, please so advise National Audubon when you renew your membership. If you want credit for your membership to remain with your local Society but would like to receive our bulletin as well as theirs, our subscription rates are \$2.00 per year payable in September of each year and we shall be very happy to include you.

MOUNTAIN PLOVERS IN CALIFORNIA

The mountain plover doesn't live up to its name: it doesn't live in the mountains. Furthermore, you won't normally find this little shorebird near the shore.

This brown-backed plover is essentially a resident of the plains. It nests on the grasslands and semidesert areas east of the Rockies from Montana to New Mexico. The wintering grounds are primarily in the southwest states and in Mexico.

Each year a segment of the mountain plover population flies west from the breeding areas to winter in California, where the birds are present in large flocks from about September through March. In central California they occur in the Central Valley south of Marysville; important areas are the southwest portion of San Joaquin Valley and many of the valley plains in the Central Coast Range. In southern California large numbers winter in Imperial Valley. Occasionally these birds are sighted on the coastal plains of southern California, where the species was abundant before urbanization.

Mountain plovers inhabit grassy or nearly barren areas where brush or other tall vegetation is sparse or absent and where

terrain is flat or gently rolling. In agricultural areas the birds may feed in newly plowed fields. Flocks sometimes follow planting, disking or harvesting equipment, feeding on organisms dislodged from the soil. Insects and other invertebrates in or on the soil constitute the entire diet of the mountain plovers.

Department of Fish and Game requests information on mountain plover sightings in California. Such information is needed to help us determine the current status of the species in our state. We urge bird watchers to report past or current observations. Whenever possible the following information should be included:

1. Date of sighting
2. Specific area
3. Number of mountain plovers observed
4. Type of habitat birds were using
5. Name of observer

Also, look for colored leg bands on mountain plovers. Color banding is being done in conjunction with a breeding population study in Colorado.

Please report observations and color band information to Ron Jurek, Department of Fish and Game, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California, 95814.

"....the greatest imbalance of all is the great and growing disparity between the condition of life enjoyed by the privileged minority who monopolize the benefits of our technological civilization and the grinding poverty which afflicts the environment of the majority of the world's people. It represents the greatest single affront to the conscience of our generation and the greatest challenge to our moral will and wisdom as well as our skill as societal managers on a global scale." Maurice Strong, Under Secretary-General for UN Environmental Affairs.

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