



The Sequoia



Volume 22, No. 7

MARCH, 1973

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

MEETINGS:

MARCH 1, THURSDAY, 7:30 PM BOARD MEETING at the home of President Bergeron. Board members and committee chairpersons should attend. Other members welcome.

MARCH 8, THURSDAY, 8:00 PM REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Roosevelt School, Broadway and Vancouver in Burlingame. Our program will be presented by our own global travellers, Lillian and Monty Montgomery. They will tell us of their experiences last year birding in the Caribbean, the Andes and the Amazon Basin. The Montgomery travelogues have become a tradition in Sequoia Audubon. Lillian and Monty really have a professional quality about their narrative and slides. Join us for an interesting and informative evening. We will also have our usual monthly features -- Paul Lechich's book reviews, Charles Newman's bird calls and Jed McClellan's plant slides.

FIELD TRIPS:

MARCH 10 SATURDAY Foster City/Belmont Slough

Leader: Al Bergeron, Phone: 349-2960

The tides will be dropping throughout the morning so an early start will be necessary in order to find the shore birds busily feeding. Later, we can try the lake and ponds for ducks and the fields for larks, owls and who knows what. Over 100 species were observed here on the Christmas Count day. Bring scopes and be prepared to stroll along the levee. Meet at 8:00 AM at the dredge on Beach Park Boulevard -- the eastern edge of Foster City.

CONSERVATION NOTES:

There will be continuing pressure on President Nixon spear-headed by the National Woolgrower's Association to rescind the ban on use of poisons for predator control on public lands. National Audubon has circulated a very poignant example of the dangers of using such poisons in an article from the January 6, 1973, issue of "Arizona Republic" by Robert L. Thomas. He wrote, "I used to be in favor of poisoning coyotes.... Last week my young Labrador retriever died in the utmost agony after

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eating poison apparently put out with the intent of poisoning coyotes.... I know there will be some that will say I got my just desserts for advocating such a death for coyotes. I guess I deserve that. But Tommy didn't deserve that kind of death. No animal does."

Such danger to pets could conceivably extend even to a child. And the effect of these poisons on the ecology is not limited just to the predators, but works through the food chain, poisoning any animal, including birds, which feeds on a poisoned animal or the bait. On the other hand, the value of predator control by any means to the cattle or sheep grower is increasingly questioned by those who have scientifically studied the question. Those who still want to see the poison ban kept in force can still write or telegraph President Nixon at the White House, Washington, D.C. 20500.

The Department of the Interior has proposed the addition to the list of Endangered Native Fish and Wildlife the subspecies of Mississippi sandhill crane whose total population is at most 40, the Utah prairie dog with a population of 5000 to 6000 over 3000 acres of private property where it is threatened by agricultural practices including possible poisoning, the Eastern cougar, and the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf. Both of these last were thought to be extinct but sightings are still reported. Proposed additions to the Endangered Foreign Wildlife (which would ban their import) are four species of kangaroo and aquatic or Mexican box turtles.

On January 9, Paul Howard, National Audubon's Western Regional Representative, made a statement at a hearing in Spokane in favor of the National Water Commission Review Draft. This is a report to assist Congress and the President in formulating the nation's future water resource programs and policies. In its present form it recommends drastic cutback in the outmoded and ecologically destructive dam, canal and drainage projects of the Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and Soil Conservation Services, and also local sharing of costs of flood control, irrigation, drainage, and navigation projects. The report advocates greater use of more modern and ecologically sound methods of flood control and denies the need, in view of present agricultural capacity, for increase of agricultural land by federally subsidized water resource developments. Mr. Howard did disagree with the low 5½% discount rate proposed for water projects and advocated a more realistic 10%. Those who share Mr. Howard's viewpoint can help ensure that the policy expressed in the report is brought to actuality by writing their Congressmen, Senators Cranston and Tunney, and the President.

-- Ruth Smith
Conservation Chairperson

Last month I was asked to become a paid member (\$1.50 annual salary) of the Sequoia Audubon Society news staff, and I blithely accepted without giving any thought to what the editor, Ed McElhany, meant by "news". What is Audubon news? Is it the same as Sierra Club news? Save the Redwood League or Environmental Defence news? Since I was in somewhat of a quandary, the best solution seemed to be to sidestep the issue and editorialize.

As a California State Park Ranger, I have met many people active in the field of conservation, but never have I met two people who have affected me more than Audubon members Vern and May Davies of Morro Bay.

I first saw the Davies one foggy morning at the base of Morro Rock. They were standing quietly by a camper van, peering up into the fog. A spotting scope stood nearby on its tripod, each had field glasses hanging idly from their necks and from my position I could see that all of their senses were tuned to something high on the rock which they could not see, but could hear or knew was there.

I watched for many minutes, never hearing or seeing what obviously they were listening for. Finally, my curiosity got the better of me and I approached and introduced myself.

As we spoke Mr. and Mrs. Davies would stop every few minutes to peer into the fog and listen intently; hearing nothing, they would resume. We stood and talked this way while the fog slowly lifted, and when the upper reaches of the great Morro Rock came into view, the Davies pointed to a spot high on the sheer rock face. With their guidance, I could faintly see a small gull-sized bird perched high up on a steep rock wall. As we watched, the bird emitted the most forlorn and lonely sound I have ever heard.

The Davies explained that last year this bird's mate had died laying an egg and he had remained for several weeks before leaving in search of a new mate. This year the same bird had returned to the rock apparently unable to find a mate and had spent the last few weeks perched on the rock face scanning the horizon in a desolate hope that a female would appear.

What we were watching was the last of a specie. An "Ishi" of the bird world. And I could not help but wonder, as the Davies wondered, just how I would feel if I was the last man on earth and was destined to live out my life alone. What we were viewing was the last of the California Peregrine Falcons.

Note: A nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons did return the following year to raise two young. Last year this same nesting pair returned and raised two young which were stolen by falconers.

-- Allen Ulm
State Park Ranger III
San Mateo Coast Area

COSTA RICA FIELD TRIP IN APRIL Seattle Audubon Society
has a field trip scheduled to the research stations of the
Organization for Tropical Studies in Costa Rica, from
April 14th to the 30th. Please write for information to:
Seattle Audubon Society, 712 Joshua Green Building,
Seattle, WA 98101

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The Atomic Energy Commission doesn't recognize "accidents"
-- only "incidents." If an atomic reactor's radioactive
wastes kills all of the fish in a lake, the AEC reports
that "100% of subject biota exhibited mortality response."

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A letter from ex-Sequoia editor Jack Morrill sends greetings
to all of his friends in Sequoia Audubon. Jack has been
busy house building but does find time to keep track of
our activities via the bulletin.

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Bird Clinic report from Seattle Audubon "Notes" of December, 1972
".... many of the larger birds coming in to the Clinic are the
victims of irresponsible hunters..... One of the gun shot
victims was Harley, a handsome Canada goose, who was found
by a Good Samaritan and brought to us with a bullet in his
head and temporarily blinded, but with a strong will to
live. As Clinic Director Joni Butler removed the bullet
and the blood gushed forth, the Good Samaritan, who had
lingered to offer assistance, gave a little moan and crumpled
into the mud outside the trailer door. 'You'll have to
revive yourself, sir,' shouted Joni who was, as is too often
the case, on duty alone. 'I'm too busy with this bird to
take care of you, too!' After weeks of loving care and five
tubes of chloromycetin applied to his eyes, Harley has
completely recovered and has been released at a nice safe
spot where hunting prohibitions are strictly enforced."

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Pescadero Marsh Beavers. In the early hours just before
dawn on Monday, February 12, President Al Bergeron observed
a beaver in Pescadero Marsh.

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AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

Sponsored by Golden Gate, Marin and Sequoia Audubon Societies,
the Ranch is an extensive natural area and nature education
center on Bolinas Lagoon near Stinson Beach. Hundred of acres
of beautiful canyons and tide lands have been preserved
through the dedication of a group of Audubon people over the
past 13 years. The most popular attraction is the view of
the common egret and great blue heron nests in the tops of
the redwood trees. Every Audubon member should see this
spectacular sight. The birds commence to arrive in early

March and the Ranch is open to the public on weekends and holidays from Saturday, March 3 through Wednesday, July 4, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Sequoia Audubon has been assigned the month of May -- a prime month for the flowers and the birds -- as the month when we provide hosts to greet the visitors. Four hosts are required each Saturday and Sunday and Memorial Day (Monday, May 28). No experience nor special knowledge is required. Here is an opportunity to become acquainted with a nationally known nature activity, a Registered Natural Landmark, and to meet some wonderful people. In addition to the nesting activities there are trails, wild flowers, a museum display and nature book store.

Call Roy Carlson (592-4976) and sign up as a host.

OBSERVATIONS COMMITTEE

The November SEQUOIA reported the formation of an Observations Committee through which we hoped to bring our readers reports of interesting sightings. So far, however, the committee has not received the support of Sequoia members in submitting reports and we would like to again urge that any interesting sighting be reported promptly to the committee:

Aveline Butler	593-4489	(Chairperson)
Jed McClellan	344-3486	
Neil Dickinson	366-7661	

We note that other Audubon Societies whose bulletins we receive have enough observations each month to provide a full page of listings. To us, this is a most interesting feature and we certainly hope we can, with our expanding membership, develop a really worthwhile monthly list.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY OIL SUMPS

The Western Regional Office of National Audubon has prepared a report concerning the effect on wildlife of the some 1500 oil sumps in the San Joaquin Valley. Oil sumps are part of the petroleum collection process. They resemble a pond of water but what the wildlife can't detect -- until too late -- is that they are covered by a tar-like layer of oil. A small sump of only 50 square feet was found to contain the bodies of 1500 song birds. A larger sump contained one owl, three herons, five geese, one snowy egret, 90 song birds, 87 ducks, two rabbits and three dogs. It is estimated that the Santa Barbara oil spill caused the loss of 3500 birds and the Standard Oil San Francisco Bay spill about 7000. The Department of Fish and Game estimate that 50,000 waterfowl die in the oil sumps each year plus perhaps 100,000 song birds and unknown numbers of mice, rabbits, snakes, squirrels, gophers, deer and some sheep and dogs.

Other petroleum producing states have a similar problem.

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