



The Sequoia



Volume 23, No. 4

December, 1973

BULLETIN OF SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

MEETINGS:

DECEMBER 6, THURSDAY 7:30 PM BOARD MEETING at the home of President Bergeron. Board members and committee chairpersons should attend. Other members are welcome.

DECEMBER 13, THURSDAY, 6:30 PM POTLUCK DINNER at Roosevelt School, Broadway and Vancouver in Burlingame. Please bring your own table settings. Phone Mrs. Ella Fox at 343-1406 and tell her what dish you plan to bring. Guests are welcome.

DECEMBER 13, THURSDAY, 8:00 PM REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING at Roosevelt School following the Potluck Dinner. Our program will feature a slide show presented and narrated by Ray Higgs, an active member of Golden Gate Audubon Society. Mr. Higgs' outstanding slides concentrate on ducks, geese and other migratory birds, a most timely subject for this month and the winter season.

FIELD TRIPS:

Mark Zumsteg, Chairman 343-7365

DECEMBER 29, 30, 31 and JANUARY 1 SALTON SEA

A special trip to Salton Sea, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Joshua Tree National Monument. December 29 and January 1 are driving days to and from the area. For details please phone Mark soon.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DECEMBER 15 MARK ZUMSTEG, Chairman

We have big plans for this year's Crystal Springs Bird Count, plans that make an unprecedented turnout extremely desirable. We have a roll for everyone -- birder or not! The person whose bird identification is just beginning or is nonexistent is a vital and necessary person. There are many clerical positions (talliers) both in and out of the field. Also needed are people to help with transportation and communication.

This year we want an accurate appraisal of the birds at bird feeders. There must be dozens of feeders stocked by Sequoia members. The denizens of these "bird McDonald's" are just yearning to be counted. Don't let them down! So stock up your feeders and report your count.

If you are the type who would rather be outside braving whatever elements we may encounter, you are especially welcome! We need lots of help in the field. We leave the choice of what area of the count you would like to work in up to you. Following is a list of the section leaders. Choose what area it is you want to help in and give the section leader a call. He will be able to give you the details: (Continued)

PRESIDENT: Albert Bergeron
251 Killdeer Court
Foster City, CA 94404
Phone: 349-2960

EDITORS: Amy and Ed McElhany
1009 Laguna Avenue
Burlingame, CA 94010
Phone: 343-3219

Bayshore -- Al Bergeron
Residential Areas -- Monty Montgomery
Northern Watershed -- Dave and Cheryl Belitzki
Southern Watershed and Huddart Park -- Fran and Roy Nelson
Western Hills and Valleys -- Byron Davies
Coast -- Mark Zumsteg

On December 1 there will be a dry run of the count. It will be the day to see if we can locate certain specialties of the area. If we don't, we have two weeks to find them so that they can be counted on the Big Day -- December 15. Your help on the 1st is desirable but not critical. If you have to choose one date or the other pick the 15th.

Everyone who participates is invited to the NEW SUPER-COMPILATION DINNER. The Social Committee is looking into a nice spot for us to get together after the count and have a good dinner along with a lot of fun. I am sure there will be plenty of "reruns" to amuse us. Besides, this dinner will enable everyone to see the totals for the count right away.

LET'S COME BACK WITH 170 SPECIES!

The Ano Nuevo Count, held one week later on December 22, will be trying to break the magic 150 species mark this year. In 1971 124 species were counted; last year 148! The Count area includes some very birdy areas -- Pescadero Marsh, Butano Forest, Gazos and Whitehouse Creeks, and Ano Nuevo Point among others.

This count is not as organized as Crystal Springs yet. Maybe that will come in a few years. First we must prove its worth. Call me to pitch in and help break 150 species. Believe me -- 150 species would put Sequoia in an elite group of organizations with two 150+ counts.

Call me no later than December 19 to receive an assignment.

-- Mark Zumsteg (343-7365)

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:

In 1900, Frank Chapman, ornithologist and editor of the Audubon Society's BIRD LORE, suggested the first Christmas Bird Count as a substitute for the then-popular traditional wild life massacre. It had become a Christmas-time custom for "sportsmen" to choose sides, take to the fields and woods and kill everything in fur or feathers that they encountered.

On that first count, 26 persons in 25 groups responded and reported their observations. The most species were reported from Pacific Grove, California -- 36 species. When Chapman retired in 1942, 327 groups and 2400 observers were participating. In 1972 these totals had risen to about 1000 groups and 20,000 observers. Some participants have 40, 50 and even 60 years of experience and the age bracket has included people from 2 months (backpacked) to 85 years.

Over the years the count rules have become more formalized and equitable to permit meaningful comparisons. Each group is now confined to a circular area with a 15 mile diameter and a date must be established within a 2-week period centered on Christmas Day. Reports are standardized and published in the April issue of National Audubon's magazine AMERICAN BIRDS. This issue of the magazine frequently exceeds

400 pages and doesn't reach subscribers until June, so great is the task of compiling the voluminous tabulations. In addition to bird lists, the magazine also lists the observers and details of each count such as type of habitat, weather, ground and ice conditions, field hours, mileage covered and means of transportation.

Participants include senior scientists from prominent scientific organizations but the great mass are the dedicated amateurs; school teachers, taxi drivers, housewives, students, writers, retired people, airline pilots, clerks, doctors, insurance salesmen, business executives and one year a dog whose specialty was flushing field birds for his human companions to count. (Sequoia, however, does not encourage canine participation.)

In some areas the count can become an endurance contest. One year a group climbed two peaks in the Great Smokies of Virginia, a 16-mile hike in sleet and rain, and saw a total of 42 birds of 10 species. Some Midwestern groups tramp through the fields in sub-zero temperatures with biting winds and tally less than 10 species. Florida, Texas and California with more balmy winter weather and concentrations of birds generally manage to overwhelm the statistics. Some groups enlist the assistance of park rangers with government boats, use walkie-talkie radios for inter-group communication and lure reluctant birds by means of tape recorded calls.

Counts range from over 225 species for a count area on down to a dozen or so. Santa Barbara and Pt. Reyes are generally among the top-ranked with around 200 species. Last year our Sequoia count was 158 species and this was a creditable showing. Competition among count areas is not really a consideration. There is small satisfaction in sitting in one's patio in California and counting more species at the feeder than a dedicated group counts individual birds in a day-long tramp through frozen, snow-covered, wind-blown fields of the Midwest. The real enjoyment of the Christmas Count comes from a day in the outdoors with congenial companions and old friends, exchanging the excitement of spotting a new species for the count. The principal satisfaction comes with doing a thorough job of covering the count area and of a reasonable assurance that every species present has been observed and recorded.

The Christmas Count yields results of scientific value. Nationwide tabulations tell us where the birds are in the winter, whether they are declining or increasing from year to year, which species seem headed for endangered status, which are most abundant.

From past counts we learn that 80% of those counted were starlings, blackbirds and house sparrows. The single most abundant species has been the red-winged blackbird at 21 million.

The cost per Christmas Count participant is \$1 which covers the cost of the work involved in compiling and tabulating the results and publishing them in AMERICAN BIRDS. Sequoia has established the policy of paying this fee from chapter funds.

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We urge that each of our one thousand plus members seriously consider participation in this valuable and fun event. It is the highlight of the Audubon year. You are invited if you are a Sequoia member, guest,

friend or visitor; are an adult, adolescent or child; can walk, ride or be carried; can distinguish a bird from an airplane (with coaching if necessary).

YOSEMITE VALLEY WINTER PROGRAMS:

On December 22 (Saturday) David Gaines, an ornithologist from University of California - Davis, will conduct an 8-hour birding seminar beginning at 9:00 AM in Yosemite Valley Visitor Center. The seminar will cover bird migrations, behavior, morphology, identification, ecology and habitat in Yosemite. On December 23 (Sunday) the annual Yosemite Christmas Count will be conducted and all visitors are invited to participate regardless of his knowledge of birds. There is no charge for the Seminar but the \$1 per person Christmas Count fee will be collected.

For further information, write Yosemite Natural History Association, Box 545, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389. Or, phone the Association at 209-372-4532, or call Jim Warner, National Park Service, 209-372-4461.

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Dr. Carl Sharsmith, dean of Yosemite Naturalists, will conduct a week end Winter Ecology Seminar including class and field work on the inter-relationships between plants, animals, soil, rock, etc., as affected by winter conditions in Yosemite. Class limited to 20 people. Fee is \$20 plus \$9 if for college credit. Seminar will be repeated February 9 - 10, 16 - 17, 23-24. Further information from Yosemite Natural History Ass'n., Box 545, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389.

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A series of 3-day environmental ski tours will be conducted March 29, 30, 31 and April 19, 20, 21 by the Yosemite Natural History Ass'n. Leaders will be Warren White and Bob Roney. Tour is to Ostrander Lake Ski Hut in the High Country and will require 7½ miles of cross country skiing with elevation gain of 1600 ft. Learn about winter conditions at 6500 - 9000 foot elevations as they affect plant and animal life and geology. Overnight accommodations and meals at the Ski Hut. Participants need to pack sleeping bags and personal articles. Limited to 20 people. Cost is \$20 including meals and use of Ski Hut. Write Yosemite Natural History Ass'n., Box 545, Yosemite National Park, CA 95389.

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs at the 41st convention in Salem, Oregon in September adopted a resolution endorsing as a new national flower "the concrete cloverleaf." -- Seattle Audubon Notes, November, 1973.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

-- Mark Zumsteg

October 28, 1973 Estero trail at Drakes Bay, Drake's Beach, Drake's Cove. Beautiful weather, clear skies, warm sun. Seventeen participants birded from 9 AM until 3 PM. Of special interest were a black-throated blue warbler, an accidental from the east, 30 white pelicans sitting on Limantour Spit, 2 black scoters and some golden plovers! A few people were able to stop at Bolinas Lagoon to see the bar-tailed godwit (see Jed McClellan's report). There was also a very close look at a leopard shark and what appeared to be a bat ray trapped in shallow water. A total of 92 species were observed as follows:

Common and Red-throated LOON, Horned, Eared, Western and Pied-billed GREBE, White and Brown PELICAN, Double-cr., Brandt's and Pelagic CORMOR-

ANTS, Great Blue HERON, Common and Snowy EGRET, Mallard, Gadwall and Pintail DUCK, Cinnamon TEAL, American WIDGEON, Lesser SCAUP, BUFFLEHEAD, White-winged, Surf and Common SCOTER, Turkey VULTURE, White-tailed KITE, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged HAWK, Sparrow HAWK, California QUAIL, American COOT, KILLDEER, American Golden and Black-bellied PLOVER, Common SNIPE, WILLET, Greater YELLOW-LEGS, Long-billed DOWITCHER, Western SANDPIPER, Northern PHALAROPE, Glaucous-winged, Western, Herring, California, Ring-billed and Heermann's GULL, Band-tailed PIGEON, Anna's HUMMINGBIRD, Belted KINGFISHER, Red-shafted FLICKER, Hairy and Downy WOODPECKER, Black and Say's PHOEBE, Horned LARK, Steller's and Scrub JAY, Common RAVEN, Common CROW, Chestnut-backed CHICKADEE, Common BUSHTIT, Pygmy NUTHATCH, WRENTIT, Bewick's WREN, ROBIN, Varied THRUSH, Western BLUEBIRD, Golden-crowned KINGLET, Ruby-crowned KINGLET, STARLING, Myrtle and Audubon's WARBLER, Western MEADOWLARK, Redwinged BLACKBIRD, Brewer's BLACKBIRD, Brown-headed COW BIRD, Purple FINCH, House FINCH, Pine SISKIN, Lesser GOLDFINCH, Rufous-sided and Brown TOWHEE, Savannah SPARROW, Oregon JUNCO, White-crowned, Fox, and Song SPARROW, Ruddy DUCK, Hermit THRUSH.

November 10, 1973 -- Palo Alto Baylands

Fourteen dedicated participants birded in rainy weather from 9 AM until 1 PM and were rewarded by the Palo Alto specialties: blue winged teal, European widgeon and close looks at the resident clapper rails. 45 species were observed as follows:

Western and Pied-billed GREBE, Double-cr. CORMORANT, Great Blue HERON, Common EGRET, Bl-cr. Night HERON, Ross' GOOSE, MALLARD, GADWALL, PINTAIL, Blue-winged TEAL, Cinnamon TEAL, European, American WIDGEON, SHOVELER, Ruddy DUCK, White-tailed KITE, Marsh HAWK, Sparrow HAWK, Ring-necked PHEASANT, Clapper and Virginia RAIL, American COOT, KILLDEER, Long-billed CURLEW, WHIMBREL, WILLET, Short and Long-billed DOWITCHER, Western SANDPIPER, Marbled GODWIT, American AVOCET, Black-necked STILT, Glaucous-winged, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's GULL, Forster's TERN, Mourning DOVE, Black PHOEBE, Long-billed Marsh WREN, Water PIPIT, STARLING, YELLOWTHROAT, Redwinged BLACKBIRD, House FINCH, American GOLDFINCH, Song SPARROW

SIGHTINGS

A bar-tailed godwit has been observed in Bolinas Lagoon in Marin County. Bonnie and I heard of it and on November 8, 1973, were permitted to enter private property along Dipsea Road at Stinson Beach where we found the bird feeding in shallow water at the southern edge of the Lagoon. The bar-tailed godwit is a bird of Alaska and northern Eurasia and is not to be expected at all in California. Monty Montgomery added it to his life list in Japan!

-- J. Ed. McClellan, Chairman

MUSHROOM SHOW

The Mycological Society of San Francisco will conduct their annual East Bay show on Sunday, December 9, at the Oakland Museum.

Since committee mark-ups of the bills will probably not be concluded before Congress recesses for Christmas, those who did not attend the November meeting will still have time to write their Congressman Paul N. McCloskey, Jr. or Leo Ryan, House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, for San Mateo County residents) and Senators Alan Cranston and John Tunney (Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510) about H.R. 10796 and S. 2435. The first would give the Secretary of Agriculture discretionary authority to resume use of DDT for insect infestation of forest or agricultural land. The Senate bill would permit use of DDT only by Forest Service personnel for control of the tussock moth, whose infestation of forests in the Northwest triggered these bills.

Gypsy moth infestations are also given as an argument for this legislation, even though studies have shown that such infestations become worse than before after use of DDT. Infestations of tussock moth are usually cyclic if nothing is done about them and natural diminution of the infestation is expected by 1974. At this time it is also hoped that a virus which attacks the insects directly may be in use.

DDT is one of the very persistent and cumulative forms of pesticides, and its use also tends to build up strains of insects resistant to it. It affects adversely many forms of wildlife in the ecological chain far beyond its insect targets, not only by immediate toxic effects but by affecting reproductive capacity. This has been most marked in the brown pelican but is also seen in many of the raptors as well as other birds. For these reasons use of DDT is now completely banned.

The Environmental Quality Coordinating Council meeting on October 19 initiated by Sequoia Audubon on the future of Belmont Slough was well attended and very successfully served its purpose of getting together the various people and agencies concerned. Al Bergeron ably started the discussion by a well-illustrated presentation of the potential danger to the Slough and its wildlife posed by future development of marinas by Foster City, Belmont and Redwood Shores. Representatives of most of the many governmental agencies, city, county, state and federal, which would be concerned gave presentations. The final unanimous decision was that plans of the three cities for Belmont Slough should be studied jointly. EQCC will form a sub-committee to foster such coordinated planning.

The fuel crisis, as might be expected, has already started calls for increased nuclear power, and a recent National Audubon report sounds a note of caution in this regard. Radioactive drinking water discovered in Broomfield, Colorado, was traced to waste dumps at the Atomic Energy Commission's nuclear weapons factory five miles away, according to the N.A.S. report. "Need we," it asks, "have another demonstration of the dangers of atomic wastes before we realize nuclear energy isn't yet proved safe?"

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors' hearing November 12 on Airport expansion had to be continued for two weeks to accommodate the many people who were not able to speak in the time allowed. Thus the Supervisor's decision was not known at the time this was written.

Sequoia Audubon Directors opposed expansion because of the resulting increase in air, noise, water and solid waste pollution and because need for expansion in the light of recent population trends and particularly of the present fuel shortage has not been documented.

CLAPPER RAIL SURVEY

Bob Gill of the Department of Fish and Game will conduct a clapper rail census on December 9, 10, 11. He invites volunteers and may be contacted at P.O. Box 47, Yountville, Ca 94599, or P.O. Box 368, Suisun, CA 94585. The survey will cover the Bay salt marshes including Napa and Petaluma marshes. Boats will be used in addition to land observations.

MARIAN LOCKWOOD

Early this year Marian was obliged to resign as secretary for Sequoia Audubon because of illness. She tells us that she is back at work and is improving steadily and hopes soon to be able to join us at our meetings. Marian has been a dedicated Audubon worker over the years and we have missed her.

OCTOBER MEETING NOTES:

John Regan, Manager of the Peninsula Humane Society, told us of the almost overwhelming problems faced by his organization due to the "pet explosion." He explained procedures used in apprehending stray dogs and cats and efforts toward finding homes for them or toward returning them to their owners. He also described the sad alternative -- a quick, painless, humane "sleep." Unfortunately there is no choice when each year some 30,000 dogs for example are brought in but only 4000 or so can be reunited with their owners or adopted by others. One of his animal control officers described the day-to-day operations and also their wildlife and bird activities. We can be thankful that we have such competent, dedicated men working in the Humane Society. All of us can help reduce their problems by doing our part to overcome the "pet explosion" through neutering and spaying of our pets.

Jed McClellan's plant of the month was the vine maple and his slides of the red fall foliage were spectacular.

Charles Newman presented the call of the California thrasher as the bird call of the month.

ACORN MUSH (or how to beat the high cost of food?)

Harvest mature acorns and dry them. Separate shells from the nuts and blend in a blender to a powder. Leach the powder in cool water for a few days or until the liquor is fairly clear. Cook as a mush and season to taste with salt and honey.

-- California Native Plant Society BLAZING STAR

NEW MEMBERS:

Atherton: Dr. Marts Beekley. Burlingame: Mary K. Brigham. Foster City: Drs. Samuel and Nancy Lerner, R. W. Lighterink. Half Moon Bay: Vera I. Coburn. Hillsborough: Mr. Arne Eriksen. Menlo Park: Jacquelin A. Drew,

Mr. Walter Fillhouer. Mountain View: Mrs. Caroline Macey. Pacifica:
 Mr. Preston Cox. Redwood City: Mr. Stephen L. Aldrich. San Carlos:
 Max and Nancy Grandfield. San Mateo: Debra Baker, Mr. E. Louis Cumpston,
 Mr. William H. Molloy, Jr. South San Francisco: T. J. Dilles, Mr.
 Joseph K. Ivory, II, Linda A. Roye. Woodside: Carolyn A. Fuller.
Foster City: Mrs. Marlene Neff.

"Creation of a park or dedication of open lands or wilderness are the most reversible of all resource decisions -- you have to win the same fight again, again and again. You lose only once, and the resource you have fought for is gone, usually irretrievably." -- Tom Dustin, executive secretary, Indiana Div'n Izaak Walton League.

THE SEQUOIA is the news letter of Sequoia Audubon Society. A subscription is \$2.00 per year for 10 issues -- one each month, September through June. Membership in National Audubon Society includes a SEQUOIA subscription to members living within this area and membership in Sequoia Audubon Society. Application for such membership may be sent to National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, together with remittance of \$12.00 for an individual membership or \$15.00 for family membership. Other classes of membership are available. Phone the editor of SEQUOIA for details. The public is invited to Sequoia Audubon meetings and field trips. Board meetings are held at the home of the president on the first Thursday of each month. Regular monthly meetings are at Roosevelt School, Vancouver Avenue and Broadway in Burlingame on the second Thursday of each month. There are no meetings in July or August. Closing date for the SEQUOIA is the 15th of each month.

MERRY CHRISTMAS -- -- HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE SEQUOIA
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