



The SEQUOIA

BULLETIN OF SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Volume 25, No. 1

September, 1975

MEETINGS:

SEPTEMBER 4, THURSDAY, 7:30 PM, BOARD MEETING at the home of Eila and Norman Fox, 51 West Bellevue in San Mateo. Board members and committee chairmen should attend. Other members are welcome.

SEPTEMBER 11, THURSDAY, 8:00 PM, REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING at Roosevelt School, Broadway and Vancouver in Burlingame. Our guest speaker will be David Roderick of Nature Expeditions International. In his speech, illustrated by color slides, Mr. Roderick will give us a general look at the environments, peoples and wild life of the mysterious and exciting portion of Kenya north of Nairobi. Charles Newman will bring us the Bird Call of the Month. The Plant of the Month, *Aralia californica*, called Elk Clover and California Spikenard, is an herb six to ten feet tall which grows along running streams in both the Coast Ranges and the Sierra Nevada. In San Mateo County, it grows in the canyons which have running streams the year round. It has large compound leaves and large panicles of small whitish flowers and black berries. It is our only native representative of the *Aralia* family, which includes the formerly very valuable Ginseng plant reports Jed McClellan.

FIELD TRIPS:

SEPTEMBER 13, SATURDAY HIGGINS-PURISMA ROAD

Meet at 8:30 AM at the dam about a half mile inland (east) from Highway 1. Higgins Purisma road turn off from Highway 1 just south of Half Moon Bay. This will be a good warm-up trip to open the season. Lunch is optional. Any afternoon activities will be optional. The leader will be Byron Davies, phone: 334-2851.

SEPTEMBER 27, SATURDAY FOSTER CITY

We will meet at 8:30 AM at the Werder Pier at the east end of Hillsdale Boulevard. We will circumnavigate Foster City moving out from the Werder Pier and into Belmont Slough as the day progresses. Bring a lunch. The trip will last until about 1:00 PM. Be prepared for mud if it rains. The leader will be Al Bergeron, phone: 349-2960.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS:

MINES ROAD - 5-17-75 Leaders: Fran and Leroy Nelson

The number of species "watched" (55) outnumbered the number of "watchers" (5). Mines Road, just a scant hour's drive from the Peninsula, offers outstanding habitat for species not indigenous to our usually frequented areas. We normally can see such birds as Lewis' and

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Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Yellow-billed Magpies, Phainopeplas, Lawrence's Goldfinches and Canyon and Rock Wrens. With a little luck you may catch a glimpse of the resident Roadrunners as we did when we were scouting a couple of days earlier. On the day of the trip we were fortunate enough to have a pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches only a few feet from us engrossed in feeding on wild grass seed. We were all able to study them leisurely through the scope. Other highlights were the singing House, Bewick's and Canyon Wrens and the Lazuli Buntings. We also watched a Red-tailed Hawk harass an immature Golden Eagle. As usual, Mines Road gave us a very interesting day. The weather was sunny and warm. We "birded" from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM. Birds sighted:

Great Blue Heron, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Sparrow, California Quail, Killdeer, Band-tailed Pigeon, Rock and Mourning Doves, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shafted Flicker, Acorn and Lewis' Woodpeckers, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Western Kingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Western Wood Pewee, Violet-green, Rough-winged and Barn Swallows, Scrub Jay, Yellow-billed Magpie, Common Raven, Common Crow, Plain Titmouse, Common Bushtit, Wrentit, House, Bewick's, Canyon and Rock Wrens, California Thrasher, Robin, Western Bluebird, Phainopepla, Starling, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, House Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Redwinged Blackbird, Bullock's Oriole, Brewer's Blackbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Rufous-sided and Brown Towhees, Lark Sparrow.

MOUNT DIABLO STATE PARK - 5-31-75

Under the expert leadership of Jean Richmond of the Mount Diablo Audubon Society we accomplished our objectives of seeing Sage Sparrows, Black Chinned Sparrows, Rufous-crowned Sparrows and Lazuli Buntings. All 22 of the group were able to get good views of these species which we do not often have an opportunity to see.

On the way home a few of the group detoured to visit Las Trampas, the newest of the regional parks. Here we heard but did not see the elusive Grasshopper Sparrow.

This sunny, warm (not hot) day was shared with quite a number of new people whom we hope enjoyed it enough to join us again.

We saw a total of 51 species between 8:00 AM and 5:30 PM. They were:

Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, Anna's and Allen's Hummingbirds, Red-shafted Flicker, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Western Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, Horned Lark, Violet-green and Cliff Swallows, Steller's and Scrub Jays, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Plain Titmouse, Common Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wrentit, House, Bewick's and Canyon Wrens, California Thrasher, Western Bluebird, Starling, Warbling Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Redwinged Blackbird, Bullock's Oriole, Brewer's Blackbird, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Rufous-sided and Brown Towhee, Lark, Rufous-crowned and Sage Sparrows (heard a Grasshopper Sparrow), Chipping and Black-chinned Sparrows.

SIERRA NEVADA (YUBA PASS AND VICINITY) 6-14, 15-75

For various reasons only six of the thirteen Sequoia members who had planned to go on the Sierra Nevada overnight field trip were able to make it with four of the six staying on another day. The small group was rewarded with perfect weather, warm and clear with cool mornings and evenings, and excellent birding. Among the unusual species well seen were the black-backed three-toed Woodpeckers at their nesting site, a male Pine Grosbeak, a Calliope Hummingbird, Dipper nestlings being fed, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Green-tailed Towhees and Brewer's Sparrows. Many Cassin's Finches and Evening Grosbeaks were seen at Yuba Pass. At Sierra Valley Marsh there were Black Terns, Common Snipes and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Some of the birds we commonly see wintering in the Bay Area are nesting in these places, such as Willets, Snipes and Hermit Thrushes. The unusual combination of habitats permitted us to tally 97 species.

In addition to the species seen on the trip, five more were seen during the scouting period. They are Western Grebe, Mountain Quail, Hammond's Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler and Black-throated Gray Warbler.

The snow-clad Sierra Buttes were magnificent! Drifts from the late snows still remained in many places. There was a beautiful array of wildflowers, fresh leaves on the aspens and other deciduous trees and new growth on the conifers. Marmots, Sagebrush Lizards, Deer, Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels, Chipmunks, assorted butterflies, spring-plumaged birds with their exuberant songs all did their parts to make ours a wonderful experience.

White Pelican, Bl.-cr. Night Heron, American Bittern, Canada Goose, Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, Sparrow Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Virginia Rail, American Coot, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Phalarope, Ring-billed Gull, Black Tern, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Common Nighthawk, White-throated Swift, Bl.-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shafted Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy, White-headed and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Horned Lark, Violet-green, Tree, Rough-winged, Barn, Cliff Swallows, Steller's Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Common Crow, Mountain Chickadee, Common Bushtit, Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, Brown Creeper, Dipper, House, Bewicks and Long-billed Marsh Wrens, Sage Thrasher, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Warbling Vireo, Yellow, Audubon's, Hermit, MacGillivray's Warblers, Wilson's Warbler, House Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed, Red-winged and Tricolored Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's and House Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, Green-tailed and Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah and Vesper Sparrow, Oregon Junco, Chipping, Brewer's, White-crowned, Fox and Song Sparrows.

-- Fran Nelson, Field Trip Chairman

CONSERVATION NEWS:

Conservation news as of mid-August will mainly bring up-to-date the various environmental issues that concerned us in June. Of these perhaps the hottest one now is the fate of development on San Bruno Mountain, which has been the subject of almost weekly public hearings before the County Planning Commission during July and will continue at least bi-weekly through August. The developer is asking for change of zoning in the General Plan from open space. There is strong public sentiment, especially in the park-poor north county where the Mountain is the last significant open space left, for no development and acquisition of the whole area as park and open space. SAS supports this concept. The main possible deterrent will be cost. Planning Commission action probably will not be much before September, and then the matter will go to the Supervisors.

This possible need for north county park funding over the amount provided annually by the Charter for Parks plan of 10¢/\$100 valuation is the main reason I am personally not in favor at present of the proposed annexation of south San Mateo County, from Belmont to the county line--essentially the Sequoia High School District--to the Santa Clara County Midpeninsula Regional Park District. The area from Belmont south on both coast and bayside contains more than 50% of the parks, either present or planned, in the whole county. If this area of the county which does not need parks votes to double its park taxation (to 20¢) it is not likely to want to increase taxes still further to bring parks to the north county where they are most needed. I feel annexation of the whole bayside area of the county to the Park District should be considered instead. However, both Sierra Club and Committee for Green Foothills are supporting the limited annexation.

The first of at least two public hearings before the County Parks and Recreation Committee was held August 13 on the Plan for the Filoli Estate in Woodside, which has been somewhat up-graded after input from the numerous hearings of the special Watershed Committee, which the devoted Nelsons and recently Howard Rathlesberger have religiously attended. The proposed golf course encroaches on a prime feeding area for migrant geese, and the Fish and Game Department feels the two are incompatible. However, Fish and Game has agreed to a beginning test phase added to the plan in which one feeding area will be planted with various grasses used on golf courses and an area slightly north in the Watershed not for public use will be planted with grain, both to see if the geese can be encouraged to change feeding sites if better food conditions are offered and to find out if they would damage the golf course turf as the Department anticipates if they continued to feed there. In the meantime nothing will be done to initiate the golf course until the results of the test are accepted by the Fish and Game Department.

The County School Board still persists in considering the proposed new Loma Mar Outdoor Education Center though there is otherwise almost universal county-wide opposition including determined opposition by the Board of Supervisors. Two alternatives, both much less costly in both money and environmental damage, are now available, so it is hard to understand the attitude of the School Board when most schools seem to be lacking funding for essentials such as teaching personnel.

An EARTHCARE petition sponsored by National Audubon and the Sierra Club jointly is now available for signatures. It is addressed to the UN calling for protection of the world's environment as a basic human right and asking for UN investigation of violations by various governments of the commitments made at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and subsequently at the 27th Session of the UN General Assembly. Copies will be available at the next SAS meeting for signature. If you can't attend ask for a copy and collect some signatures yourself. Signed petitions should be sent to C.B. Barnes, Audubon International Activities, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022 by September 30.

-- Ruth Smith, Conservation Chairman

SIGHTINGS:

"Summery" of Summer Observations

A Black-footed Albatross, rarely observed from shore, was seen following a ship off Pigeon Point, July 9. Hundreds of Brown Pelicans were seen along our coastline this summer, and encouraging was the fact that immatures outnumbered adults by 2 to 1. A concentration of approximately 2,000 Brandt's Cormorants were feeding in Half Moon Bay, July 19, accompanied by dozens of Brown Pelicans, Heermann's Gulls, and at least a hundred Common Murres. Two Harlequin Ducks were at Ano Nuevo Point during the summer, as were a few Black Brant. A few pairs of Snowy Plovers fledged young at Belmont Slough and Pescadero this summer. Three Lesser Yellowlegs, rare migrants in our area, were at Pescadero Marsh, August 8. A Pectoral Sandpiper, another rare migrant, was at Pescadero, August 8. At least five Bairds' Sandpipers were present at Pescadero, August 5--8. A Semipalmated Sandpiper discovered on August 3 at Pescadero, provides the first San Mateo County record and only the fourth record for Northern California. The bird was seen by over a hundred birders.

A pair of Least Terns feeding at Redwood Shores, July 8 were undoubtedly from the nearby Bair Island colony. Two Elegant Terns were at Pigeon Point, July 31, and one was at Coyote Point, July 30. A Tufted Puffin was at Pigeon Point, July 16. The species formerly nested in our county at Pedro Point, but now nests on the Farallon Islands.

A Burrowing Owl at Foster City, July 30, was the only one found this season. Ten Vaux's Swifts were along Alpine Road, west of Skyline on June 26--they nest at Portola State Park. Two pairs of Purple Martins on Alpine Road, west of Skyline, June 26, may indicate local nesting. A Black-throated Gray Warbler was singing at the junction of Alpine Road and Skyline, June 26.

Barry Sauppe
Peter Metropulos

COYOTE POINT MUSEUM:

The Coyote Point Museum will be offering three classes of interest to Audubon Society members this fall.

The first will be "The Peninsula - A Changing Ecology." This is a short course to further one's understanding of the Peninsula environment, with emphasis on the land resources of San Mateo County. It will consist of six two-hour lectures and one four-hour field trip. Class will meet at the Coyote Point Museum in San Mateo on Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30, starting September 17. This course is

co-sponsored with Canada College. One unit of credit is available. Fee \$10.

Supplementing the Ecology course are two classes in practical training to prepare volunteers who wish to become Museum Docents. For these, there is no fee.

The "Foothill Docents" program will be on Thursdays for seven weeks, beginning October 2, from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM. The emphasis will be on teaching and interpretive techniques to enable Docents to lead nature walks in the foothills.

"Animal Docents" will meet on Thursdays for five weeks; October 9, 16, 23, 30 and November 13, from 9:30 to 11:30 AM. The training will deal primarily with native animals and how to handle them, also how to conduct animal tours at the museum.

Those registered in any of the above classes may participate in a special session on Endangered Species to be held on November 13.

For further information or registration for any of these classes, call the Coyote Point Museum, 573-2595.

EAGLES vs. BEEF:

--From NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATIONS "CONSERVATION NEWS" 6/15/75

--If a golden eagle can eat one jackrabbit per day (which it can!) and if eight jackrabbits will eat as much grain as one 800 lb. steer (which they will!) does it then follow that when somebody illegally shoots an eagle, he saves the lives of 365 rabbits and starves 45 head of cattle?

ANNUAL MEETING -- JUNE 12, 1975 --ELECTION

The following officers were elected for the 1975--1976 term:

PRESIDENT:	Byron Davies	DIRECTOR:	Ed McElhany
VICE PRESIDENT:	John Prime	"	Norman Fox
SECRETARY:	Sheila Davies	"	Charles Newman
TREASURER:	Victor Crotchett	"	Howard Rathlesberger
DIRECTOR:	Al Bergeron	"	Ruth Smith

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

President Byron Davies has appointed the following:

Bicentennial:	Al Bergeron	Program:	John Prime
Conservation:	Ruth Smith	Sightings:	Barry Sauppe
Habitat Acquisition:	Charles Newman	Christmas Count:	Barry Sauppe
Membership:	Liv Gurevitz	Study Program:	Nancy Huff

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH:

Over the past several years Helen Pratt has conducted exhaustive observations at the Ranch heronry and has compiled reports for each nesting season for both the herons and the egrets. Following is a special report from Helen:

This season, for the first time in the nine years that I have been studying the heronry at Audubon Canyon Ranch and probably for the first time since the ranch was purchased by the local Audubon Societies, predation was a serious threat to the nesting herons and egret. We first noticed nests with bloody remains of egret chicks early in June. By 16 June it was clear that we were losing an unusually large number of nests. On 19 June nest loss had reached disastrous proportions. Skip Schwartz decided that it was essential to stage a night

watch in the hope of finding out which of the possible predators might be responsible.

On the evening of 20 June Skip, Libby Meyers and I arrived at the overlook by 8:00 PM equipped with binoculars, scopes, and bright flashlights. We examined the section of the heronry where there were still some nests with eggs and young to verify nest contents.

At about 8:45, soon after sunset but while it was still light, we heard raucous cries of alarm from that part of the heronry. The adults were standing, giving the warning call and looking down. We saw the redwood foliage shaking and soon the face of a raccoon appeared between the branches. Before the night was over it had raided six nests in that cluster of trees, one egret nest with eggs, four with chicks and one heron nest with chicks.

It has been the stated policy of Audubon Canyon Ranch to study and observe natural phenomena without interfering in the course of events, but we felt that this raccoon could in time destroy the very focal point of the ranch, the heronry itself. It seemed essential to interfere to the extent of removing the raccoon.

Skip rounded up raccoon traps and within the next five days he captured five raccoons which were taken to a different section of Marin County and released. Many egrets reestablished nests but the season was so far advanced it seems unlikely that they would raise any chicks. As I write this it appears that only 5 egret chicks will fledge instead of about 100 that we would normally expect. We all regret that we discovered the predator too late to save the egret chicks this year. However, the experience gained will provide a guide for prompt action in the future if a similar situation arises again.

-- Helen Pratt

Bergeron, Al	349-2960	251 Killdeer Ct. Foster City 94404
Crotchett, Victor	343-5226	1104 Balboa Ave. Burlingame 94010
Danielson, Maryann	342-6919	848 Edgehill Dr. Burlingame 94010
Davies, Byron & Sheila	334-2851	606 Cambridge St. San Francisco 94134
Fox, Norman	343-1406	51 W. Bellevue, San Mateo 94402
Friday, Robert	365-1194	80 Amber Ct. San Carlos 94070
Gurevitz, Liv	347-0912	1400 Southdown Rd. Hillsborough 94010
Huff, Nancy	355-7635	439 Andover, Pacifica 94044
McElhany, Ed & Amy	343-3219	1009 Laguna Ave. Burlingame 94010
Newman, Charles	697-5601	25 Corte Alegre, Millbrae 94030
Prime, John	345-4968	848 W. Hillsdale Blvd. San Mateo 94403
Rathlesberger, Howard	697-6611	1795 Hunt Dr. Burlingame 94010
Sauppe, Barry	349-8470	820 E. 19th Ave.-18, San Mateo 94403
Smith, Ruth	322-5279	1231 Hoover St. Menlo Park 94025

THE SEQUOIA is the newsletter 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 with this area (San Mateo County) and membership in Sequoia Audubon Society.

If you move from our area but want to continue to receive the SEQUOIA, please notify the editors and we shall be happy to send it to you. Otherwise we shall assume you would prefer to receive the newsletter of the Chapter in the area to which you have moved and have so notified National Audubon Society.

Application for National Audubon membership may be sent to National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Student Membership	\$7	Donor Membership	\$250
Regular "	\$15	Patron "	\$500
Family "	\$18	Life "	\$1000
Sustaining "	\$30	Affiliated Club	\$50
Supporting "	\$50	Audubon Subscription	
Contributing "	\$100	<u>Only</u>	\$13

The Closing date for THE SEQUOIA is the 15th of the month.

THE SEQUOIA
Sequoia Audubon Society
1009 Laguna Avenue
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Permit No. 152
Burlingame, California

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