



sequoia needles

Bulletin of the
October, 1988

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

San Mateo County, Ca.
Vol. 37, #2

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

The October program will feature Ms. Shawneen Finnegan, a dedicated bird-watcher from our area. Shawneen recently visited Denali State Park and other regions of Alaska. She will share with us some of her photographs of this majestic region.

Shawneen was also able to visit the Mecca of North American birders, Attu Island. This island, the most western of the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, is the point in North America that is nearest to Eurasia. It is well known for the number of rare Siberian birds that are found in its environs, as well as for the intensity of the birdwatching experience there. The living conditions are primitive, but the sun is seldom down and any moment can bring a new birding triumph or defeat. Shawneen will share with us some of her adventures, as well as beautiful pictures of some rare birds that she found in Alaska. Meetings are held at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside on the second Thursday of every month. The Social Mixer begins at 7:30 P.M. with the General Meeting and Program at 8:00. The public is invited.

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM

Doug Cheeseman, well known tour-leader, photographer, educator and lecturer will be our November presenter.

His program will focus on the mountain gorillas of Rwanda and will also feature the birds and wildlife of East and South Africa.

A SPECIAL THANKS

To Al Seubert, who took charge of this month's *NEEDLES* folding and mailing session in Linda Kypta's absence. Al and his volunteers - Lee Brown, Carmen Gale, Bonnie McClellan, Art Perry and Betty Seubert - handled the matter with superb efficiency.

When your Editor called Al to notify him that the newsletter was ready at the printers, Al responded with the information that it had already been picked up and addressed and that the volunteers would be folding it the next morning.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

CLIFF RICHER

Although the Board of Directors runs the Sequoia Audubon Society on a month-to-month basis, most of the real work of the organization is done in its committees. It is also in these committees that members come to the attention of other members and eventually end up being nominated to the Board or elected to one of the four major offices. And most of the committees are always looking for new volunteers.

Some of the Committees by the nature of their work are really one-person operations. The Field Trip Committees, the Program Committee, Bird Sightings and the Newsletter Editorial Committees fall into that category in our set-up.

The Field Trip Committee (which consists of anyone that's interested) meets once a year to exchange ideas and set up the schedule (see Page Four for this year's schedule) and then leaves it up to the Chair (Weekends: Steve Schafer - in his second year on the job - or Weekdays: Nick Coiro - in his third year) to firm it up and make sure the trips and the leaders match up as much as possible to the schedule or to find substitutes when necessary.

The Program Chair operates pretty much on the same basis except that the input is even less formal and the scheduling is even more tentative. The work is made even more difficult by the limitations of our budget (Gee, do you think we could get Roger Tory Peterson if we paid him \$100, instead of our usual fee?) and by the presenters' individual preferences - some need a year's notice and others don't normally plan more than 20 minutes in advance. Janet Duerr is coping with these problems this year.

Bird Sightings is by its nature a one-person operation. Even when it is split into areas or by species it simply means a number of individual compilations. Peter Metropolis handles this and also serves as County Editor for *American Birds*. After compiling his data, Peter then shares it with us in his monthly column. (See Page Seven)

Putting the *NEEDLES* together is also essentially a one-person operation although there are many contributors and lots of suggestions. Getting it out to you is another story - but we'll save that for next month.

Yet even these "one person committees" need help from the members. Steve is always looking for more field trip leaders and ideas; Janet for program suggestions; Peter needs input from SAS birders in order to have records to compile and report; and the *NEEDLES* - as your newsletter - is better when more of you are represented in its pages.

So if you have a good idea - for field trips or programs - or something that you're itching to see in writing, or you find a "good" bird, don't keep it to yourself -- share it with the rest of us.

And if your talents lie elsewhere and you want to get more involved, then you're the person we're looking for. Give us a call now. Don't wait until next month when we discuss the real workers - what I call the "pick and shovel" committees.

CALENDAR

October 1988

Sun.	Mon.	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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OCT. 1 COASTAL CLEAN-UP DAY. Volunteers will spend about SATURDAY 2 - 2 1/2 hours cleaning up the beach and camping areas north of Pigeon Point Lighthouse. For those who wish to stay, there will be a short sea-bird watching session. After lunch, there will be a quick birding survey and clean-up trip up Gazos Creek, along Cloverdale Road and back to Pescadero Marsh. We suggest you wear light work gloves for the clean-up activities. Plastic bags for trash will be provided. We will meet just north of the lighthouse gate at 9:00 A.M., rain or shine.

BEACH CAPTAIN CLIFF RICHER 355-4058

OCT. 6 SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 PM at the Kypta residence. THURSDAY ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME, but those wishing to attend should contact the Sequoia Office (593-7368) to be sure there is enough room to accommodate everyone as this is a private residence.

OCT. 8 MONTEREY BAY PELAGIC TRIP & MONTEREY AREA FIELD SATURDAY TRIP combines a pelagic trip to the Monterey Sea-valley on Saturday with a morning visit to some of OCT. 9 Monterey's best birding hotspots on Sunday. A fall pelagic trip out of Monterey typically yields a dozen or more species of sea birds, most of which are difficult to view from shore. The pelagic trip is by Shearwater Journeys, which has been organizing Monterey Bay pelagic trips for over ten years. There will be three or four expert sea-birders on board to help locate and identify the birds we expect to see. On Sunday, we will hunt for vagrants at such places as Moon Glow Dairy, the Salinas Sewage Ponds, and the Salinas and Carmel River mouths. The exact itinerary will be flexible, in case an exceptionally rare bird turns up at one or more of these locations. The cost of the pelagic trip is \$44 per person; send your check, along with the name, address, and telephone number of each person in your party, directly to Shearwater Journeys, Box 1445, Soquel CA 95073. Be sure to specify the October 8th trip. Contact the trip leader (below) for additional information about the trip, including lodging, directions, etc. Space on the pelagic trip is limited, so make your reservation as soon as possible. Those not wishing to participate in the pelagic trip may join the group at 9 AM on Sunday morning at the intersection of Hwy 1 and Jetty Road in Moss Landing.

COORDINATOR STEVE SCHAFER 689-0788

OCT. 13 SAS GENERAL MEETING. DENALI, ATTU AND THE MAJESTY THURSDAY OF ALASKA with Shawneen Finnegan, dedicated bird-watcher and SAS member. The majestic scenery, the resident wildlife and the rare avian visitors from Siberia will all be part of her illustrated talk. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 PM, General Meeting begins at 8:00. See the article on Page One for further details.

OCT. 15 CASCADE RANCH FIELD TRIP. Gary Strachan, State SATURDAY Parks Ranger, Auduboner and extraordinary birder will lead us through one of State Parks' newest and least known acquisitions. As the resident ranger at Año Nuevo State Reserve, Gary has had many opportunities to explore and enjoy this marvelous addition to the system and is eager to share it with us. Since access to the Ranch may be restricted because of fire danger or habitat protection, the leader reserves the possibility of changing the trip site without notice. The alternative site will be the Año Nuevo (Continued on Page Three)

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

DAN MURPHY

Many thanks to Jeanne Price for her "News from the Ranch" contribution during the past several years. Jeanne plans to continue as an active volunteer and member of the ACR Advisory Board.

The new bulletin from ACR has been mailed to Audubon Canyon Ranch contributors. This issue gives insights into the three primary preserves, the biologists who help guide their operation and the many people who help make the Ranch a world class system of sanctuaries and environmental education facilities. A limited number of bulletins are still available by calling (415) 868-9244.

Preliminary reports from Helen Pratt indicate the nesting season at ACR was about average. An exciting exception was the successful nesting of *snowy* egrets for the first time since 1969. As many as six young were sighted toward the end of the season.

It may not be too late to participate in an Audubon Canyon Ranch seminar this fall. Family programs include 2 sessions of "Experiencing Nature Together", Oct. 9 and Nov. 12 and the annual "Family Halloween Celebration" on Oct. 29-30. "Coyote's People" (Oct. 15) will focus on Sonoma's native people. "Introducing the Monarch" (Nov. 19) will certainly inform and stimulate participants about these beautiful insects. By the way, did you know that ACR has two monarch butterfly preserves and only one heronry? Work Days are scheduled for Cypress Grove and Bolinas Lagoon Preserves on Nov. 5 and 12 respectively. What a great way to help ACR and enjoy our preserves. Both are free, but require advance registration. Of course the new year is just a few months away so it isn't too early to make that first resolution, the one you can keep. Join our "Third Annual Resolution Hike" at Bouverie Audubon Preserve on January 1. For further information see last month's *NEEDLES* or call ACR at (415) 868-9244.

Plans are being made to train Ranch Guides, those wonderful folks who help interpret various features of the Ranch on weekends during the public season. Watch for details.

The ACR family is deeply saddened by the loss of two of our members.

Long time Board member, past President and a true and compassionate leader, Tom Price, died in June. Though Tom's contributions are many I will always remember the emphasis he placed on personally acknowledging the contributions of others. Though saying thank you seems like such a little thing, it is a big thing when it means spending time away from your family and business to pen notes to hundreds of contributors per month. Thank you Tom.

(Continued on Page Three)

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

(Continued from Page Two)

Karen Schwartz, wife of ACR General Manager Skip Schwartz, died in August. Karen's contributions to the Ranch went well beyond her role as bookstore manager where so many of us came to know her. Long time ACR supporters recall the weekends at the Overlook she spent monitoring the heronry, and introducing us to the marvelous natural history of the Ranch. She was a long time supporter of our education programs, especially our efforts to work with inner city children. Wife, mother, naturalist, educator and straight-forward purveyor of common sense, Karen helped guide ACR for many years. Audubon Canyon Ranch has established the Karen Schwartz Education Fund in her memory.

USING THE PUBLIC TRUST DOCTRINE

The California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, a coalition of angling groups, buoyed by the victories in the Mono Lake case, are pressing the Public Trust Doctrine in a series of new actions.

The Public Trust Doctrine is part of the State Constitution but has been ignored for years. Now the Alliance is claiming that dams operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, EBMUD, Yuba County Water Agency and PG&E constitute an unreasonable single use of public resources. By filing these complaints with the State Water Resources Control Board, the Alliance hopes to maintain sufficient flow on several major rivers to restore runs of salmon, steelhead and shad.

GIANT PIGEONS?

The Seattle Audubon Society has been asked to join a multi-agency task force that has been convened to evaluate the problem of what to do with its largest bird pest - the Canada Goose!

These particular flocks of geese are non-migratory although descended from wild birds introduced into the city over fifty years ago. About twenty years ago the population was augmented with a relocation from a flooded dam site by the Washington Department of Wildlife.

For unknown reasons the goose population has exploded over the last ten years and has grown to the point where goose droppings and over-grazing have created health and environmental problems wherever the flocks congregate.

To make matters worse, these geese are not from one of the smaller races but are *Branta canadensis maxima* - popularly called the giant Canada goose.

The task force is being asked to determine the actual number of geese in urban Seattle, their distribution, annual life cycle, habitat use, cause of the population explosion and to come up with a solution to the problem.

CALENDAR

(Continued From Page Two)

State Reserve. The trip will begin at 9:00 AM at the parking lot of the Año Nuevo State Reserve and end approximately at noon. To get there, take Hwy. 1 south from Half Moon Bay. In approximately 30 miles you will see the signs for the Año Nuevo State Reserve. Turn right and follow the road to the parking lot. Identify yourself as a trip participant to the ranger at the entrance booth. Sturdy shoes or boots are recommended as there may be some rough footing.

LEADER

GARY STRACHAN

OCT. 25 HAYWARD BAYSHORE - A MIDWEEK FIELD TRIP to an area TUESDAY that has been relatively unexplored by SAS birders will begin at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of the interpretive center just across the San Mateo Bridge. To get there take Hwy. 92 across the bridge to the first exit. After exiting, take a left and look for the signs to the interpretive center.

LEADER

NICK COIRO

349-1834

OCT. 29 SAN BRUNO MOUNTAIN FIELD TRIP. San Bruno Mountain SATURDAY stands in isolation, looking a bit out of place alongside the skyscrapers of San Francisco. Yet it is home to a wealth of wildlife, hidden in pockets of woodland and in sheltered canyons. We will be exploring its unique flora and fauna during this half-day trip. We will meet at the San Bruno Mountain Park ranger station at 9:00 AM. To reach the ranger station: From northbound U.S. 101, take the Bayshore Blvd./Brisbane exit, and go north on Bayshore Blvd. about 1 miles to Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. Turn left on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway and follow the road about two miles to the station.

LEADER

AL SEUBERT

November 1988

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NOV. 3 SAS BOARD MEETING. 7:30 PM at the Kypta residence. THURSDAY ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME, but those wishing to attend should contact the Sequoia Office (593-7368) to be sure there is enough room to accommodate everyone.

NOV. 5 FIELD TRIP TO THE PALO ALTO BAYLANDS. The Baylands SATURDAY is one of the few remaining and best preserved of the once numerous bay salt marshes and is the home of the endangered black rail and California clapper rail. It is also the winter home of many species of waterfowl, prime feeding grounds for five species of heron and a stopover for migrating birds. Many rare birds have been reported from this area during the fall and winter months and our previous trips have found a number of them. Join us and see what we come up with this time. We will meet at the farther end of the duck pond at 9:00 AM. To get there take Hwy 101 south to the Embarcadero exit. Follow the Embarcadero east to its end and take a left. The duck pond is a short way up on the left opposite the Sea Scout and Yacht Club buildings.

LEADER

STEVE SCHAFER

689-0788

NOV. 10 SAS GENERAL MEETING. THE MOUNTAIN GORILLAS OF THURSDAY RWANDA with Doug Cheeseman as well as other highlights of the wildlife of East and South Africa. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 PM, General Meeting begins at 8:00.

NOV. 12-13 THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY WILDLIFE REFUGES.

NOV. 19 LAKE MERCED FIELD TRIP

NOV. 30 FOSTER CITY AREAS FIELD TRIP.

FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE: 1988-1989

STEVE SCHAFER, FIELD TRIP CHAIRMAN

Following is the field trip schedule for 1988-89, as of mid-September. Trip dates are subject to change, especially those scheduled for March and beyond. Additional trips may also be added later. Please contact Steve Schafer (689-0788) for information about any of the trips, as well as the most current trip dates.

September

3-5	Sat-Mon	Salton Sea	Janet Duerr
25	Sun	Point Reyes	Cliff Richer

October

1	Sat	Coastal Clean Up	Cliff Richer
8-9	Sat-Sun	Monterey Area & Pelagic Trip	Steve Schafer
15	Sat	Cascade Ranch/Año Nuevo	Gary Strachen
25	Tue	Hayward Bayshore	Nick Coiro
29	Sat	San Bruno Mountain	Al Seubert

November

5	Sat	Palo Alto Baylands	Steve Schafer
12-13	Sat-Sun	Sacramento NWR/Gray Lodge	Cliff Richer
19	Sat	Lake Merced	Dan Murphy
30	Wed	Foster City	Nick Coiro

December

3	Sat	Foster City	Nick Coiro
17	Sat	Crystal Springs CBC	Barry Sauppe
31	Sat	Año Nuevo CBC	Barry Sauppe

January

7	Sat	San Pedro County Park	Scott Smithson
11	Wed	Foster City by Bicycle	Nick Coiro Linda Kypta
21-22	Sat-Sun	Los Banos/Panoche Valley	Cliff Richer
28	Sat	Pescadero Marsh	Dave Augustine

February

4	Sat	Coyote Hills	Nick Coiro
8	Wed	Palo Alto/Mountain View	Linda Kypta
11	Sat	Point Reyes	Dave Shuford
18-20	Sat-Mon	Tule Lake/Great White North	Janet Duerr

March

9	Thu	Princeton Harbor	Nick Coiro
12	Sun	Mountain View Forebay	Linda Kypta
18-19	Sat-Sun	Sonoma County	Steve Schafer

April

8	Sat	Waddell Creek/Año Nuevo	Gary Strachen
16	Sun	Mines Road	Cliff Richer
22-23	Sat-Sun	Yosemite	Steve Schafer
29	Sat	Jasper Ridge	Louise Fletcher

May

6	Sat	San Bruno Mountain	Al Seubert
20	Sat	San Pedro County Park	Scott Smithson
27-29	Sat-Mon	San Jacinto Mountains	Janet Duerr

June

3	Sat	Gazos Creek	Peter Metropulos
17-18	Sat-Sun	Yuba Pass/Sierra Valley	Cliff Richer

BAAC MEETING

The Bay Area Audubon Council Meeting will be held Saturday, October 1 at the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary at 6 Greenwood Beach Road in Tiburon.

This session is hosted by Golden Gate Audubon Society and will feature John Schmidt of the Wildlife Conservation Board on applying for Proposition 70 funds and Jerry Meral of the Planning and Conservation League on current legislation.

A social mixer begins at 9:30 and the meeting commences at 10:00 A.M.

THE NEW CONDORS

Even as you read this the first of an anticipated 20 Andean condors may be riding the thermals of Northern Ventura County.

With the release of any California Condors now postponed for at least three years, the Condor Project, headed up by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, has decided to release 20 radio-tagged female Andean condors in the rugged Tehachapi Mountains north of Fillmore.

Through intensive study of the Andean Condors and release procedure experimentation on them the researchers hope to learn more about release techniques, foraging habits, habitat usage and potential dangers to the California species.

Some critics of the program have argued that the common turkey vulture should be used as an experiment subject, rather than the threatened condor. Arguments against this are:

1. Turkey vultures would emigrate from the mountain area to their preferred habitat areas.
2. The two species are not that closely related.
3. The wing loading and (assumed) ways of food detection are dissimilar.
4. The primary food sources are different, although this may not always have been true (see item 5).
5. Some experts theorize that the range expansion of the more aggressive and gregarious turkey vulture has contributed to the decline of the condor.
6. The two species are at opposite ends of the spectrum in their susceptibility to toxic substances - particularly lead.

Although the Andean condor is endangered in parts of its range, the birds to be used will be captive-bred birds whose parents were taken from areas where the Andean condor is still common.

Some attrition in the wild is expected, (one died enroute to the release area) but when the project is completed, the Andean birds will be re-captured, flown to South America and released (with some male counterparts) into areas where they are now extirpated or endangered.

CARRIZO PLAIN RESERVE A REALITY

Early this past spring 16 different organizations, headed by the Nature Conservancy, succeeded in putting together an 82,000 acre reserve to permanently protect a dozen imperiled species and a large example of the nearly gone Central Valley habitat.

The steering committee included groups that are often on opposite sides of the same issues and represented federal, state and county government organizations, non-profit groups (including the National Audubon Society), agricultural interests and oil companies. Ownership of the land will be deeded to the Bureau of Land Management and management will be under a cooperative agreement between the BLM and The Nature Conservancy. Under the master plan devised by the committee, the preserve will eventually be expanded to 181,000 acres.

In addition to the twelve endangered or threatened species the plain once was home to tule elk, pronghorn antelope and the California condor. Small herds of the elk and antelope have been re-introduced and the preserve will provide a safe foraging ground for the condor if long-range plans for its re-introduction are successful.

The Carrizo Plain is southeast of San Luis Obispo and runs parallel to the Central Valley along the Kern County line south almost to Ventura County.

MONO LAKE UPDATE

In a sweeping decision, the State's Third District Court of Appeals revoked the Los Angeles DWP's water diversion licenses. So devastating was this decision that the court agreed to re-review its decision later this month. Attorneys for the Mono Lake Committee feel confident that the basic decision will remain unchanged.

LA Mayor Tom Bradley has implemented a plan to save 70,000 acre-feet of water each year, the exact amount needed to protect Mono Lake.

The EPA has now entered the fight for the preservation of the Mono Basin. They have re-classified the basin as an area "with a strong likelihood of violating" air quality standards. The re-classification is largely based on the probability that further diversions will expose large areas of alkali flats to the winds and create dust storms such as those that now characterize the Owens Valley. The state has been ordered to step up their monitoring program and to prepare a plan to mitigate the problem.

The long awaited National Forest Service Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement should now be ready. To get a copy or to get on the Forest Service mailing list write to:

Dennis Martin, Forest Supervisor
Inyo National Forest 73 North Main Street
Bishop, CA 93514 (619) 873-5841

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY PATCHES ---- \$4.00 BY MAIL
San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching is Sequoia Audubon Society's guide to birding sites in San Francisco and San Mateo County. More than 30 different spots are described and accompanied by maps, directions and helpful notes about each spot. A species index directs you to habitats for the birds you want to see. Order one for yourself and several as gifts! Only \$6.00!

(Taxes, shipping and handling included).

Also available by mail - including postage and tax
The Birder's Handbook-Ehrlich, Dobkin & Wheye 17.60
National Geographic Field Guides-New Edition 17.25
Birding Northern California - Jean Richmond 12.00
Mono Lake Guidebooks 7.50
Pacific Coast Checklist-in pads of 25 3.50

BIRDING VIDEOTAPES AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL

TECHNIQUES OF BIRDING by Arnold Small - \$2/wk.

VIDEO GUIDE TO BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA - \$5/wk.

Send checks to: Sequoia Audubon Society
Allow 14-18 days 720 El Camino Real #403
for delivery Belmont, Ca. 94002



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ALSO AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS AND SOME FIELD TRIPS

SHEER GALL!

The Shell Marsh, severely damaged by the oil spill last spring is still a long way from recovery. Observers report that there is little sign of cleanup activity. Occasionally there is a gun blast intended to harry the birds away from the contaminated areas, usually without success - but no cleanup work.

Meanwhile the development company which owns the marsh - apparently having decided that it no longer qualifies as a wetland - has posted a "FOR SALE" sign on the property. If this piece of gall works, then it gives every developer in the state a blueprint to fill the bay. First pollute the wetland beyond reclamation, then sell it or fill it.

Mount Diablo Audubon Society is watching this situation very closely.

EDUCATION REPORT

JANET DUERR

The Education Committee is concerned with informing local residents of the importance of ecology and the environment in our everyday lives. We especially hope to interest young people in their natural surroundings and teach them about the need to protect those surroundings. The Committee has taken several actions which we hope will improve environmental education in our county.

Sequoia Audubon is presenting a small scholarship to cover a portion of the tuition expenses for a local resident, Kathy Glostein, to attend the Audubon Expedition Institute. The Institute offers degrees in environmental and environmental education programs.

The Education Committee is preparing a mailing to all of the principals and science department chairpersons in San Mateo County public schools. This mailing will include information on three different programs sponsored by the Sequoia Audubon Society.

The Sequoia Audubon chapter is sponsoring an environmental education award program. These awards are given to those who, through public education, have contributed to the better understanding of the interdependence of natural resources and the need for protecting native ecosystems and wild fauna and flora. This award is not limited to members of Sequoia Audubon or to public school teachers.

The Education Committee hopes to increase the number of classes in the county which receive Audubon Adventures, a bimonthly newsletter designed to teach young people more about their natural surroundings. We are sending information about the program to all of the local public schools, in the hopes of connecting with teachers who are interested in using this program in their classrooms.

Sequoia Audubon will be sending out information on its scholarship program for public school teachers. The scholarships will be offered to selected qualified teachers and student teachers at grade levels K-12 who wish to learn more about our environment and about using natural studies during their own teaching. The scholarships will be available in four different programs. These programs are San Francisco State University's week long course in "The Natural Sciences for Teachers" at its Sierra Nevada campus; San Jose State University's four day course in "Environmental Education-Materials and Methods"; California State University, Hayward's course "Environmental Education in the Curriculum"; and the National Audubon Society's week long "Field Ecology Workshops" in Wyoming.

If you know of any educators who may be interested in any of the above programs, or if you are interested in becoming involved with the Education Committee of Sequoia Audubon, please contact us through the Sequoia Audubon office.

BIRDING HOTSPOTS #6

THE BOSQUE DEL APACHE NWR

NICK COIRO

Bosque del Apache (Woods of the Apache) National Wildlife Refuge is located in south central New Mexico along the Rio Grande River. It is a few miles east of Interstate 25 about half way between Albuquerque, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas.

The area is essentially arid but low dikes have created water impoundments - ideal habitats for water birds, sandhill cranes and wading birds. The refuge also supports many raptors, passerines and game birds.

Birding can be good most months but is best from November through February. The sunrise flight of snow geese, Ross' geese and sandhill cranes from their roosting area is spectacular in both sight and sound.

The key attraction however are wintering whooping cranes. These are part of the separate flock of whooping cranes established by having eggs from captive and wild birds hatched by foster sandhill crane parents at Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. In January 1987, I was able to study five of these birds at close range.

Another interesting bird that is common in the Refuge is the white-winged pheasant, a sub-species of the r-necked pheasant that is better suited to arid regions.

The refuge checklist lists 293 species including many birds usually found in desert habitats.

Motels and a modern RV park are located in nearby Socorro and another campground is located on the northern border of the Refuge.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DESERTS FIELD TRIP

Eight intrepid members of the Audubon Society spent Labor Day weekend in the temperate climes of the deserts of southern California. The group visited areas in Antelope Valley (dry and 110°F), Morongo Valley (pleasantly cool at 90°F), and the Salton Sea (the most unpleasant at a humid 100°F). The hot weather was more than adequately compensated by the lack of hot water at the motel. Fortunately, the birding made it all worthwhile. We all saw sora, Virginia Rail, Baird's and pectoral sandpipers, laughing and yellow-footed gulls, and great-tailed grackle. A bird that we had missed on previous Salton Sea excursions, the fulvous whistling-duck, was tracked down at the south end of Salton Sea with the aid of a member of Santa Clara Audubon, Marc Fenner. In all, the group saw over 150 species of birds.

SHOREBIRD LECTURE

Dr. Pete Myers, National Audubon's Vice-President for Science, will lecture on "Great Exertions and Immense Gluttony: Shorebirds Across the Americas" on Oct. 15 at 2 P.M. at the Oakland Museum Theatre, 1000 Oak St., in Oakland. The lecture is sponsored by the Golden Gate Audubon Society.

REPORT FROM THE PCL

The passage of Proposition 70 - the Parks and Wildlife Initiative - was a substantial victory for the Planning and Conservation League. The Farm Bureau and Chamber of Commerce opposition was largely un-financed and the 65% victory was extremely gratifying. One unexpected benefit was the large amount of favorable publicity the PCL received as a result of its sponsorship of the measure. The environmental lobbying group is now heavily involved in the implementation phase of Proposition 70.

With this experience behind it, the PCL is now working on the Tobacco Tax Initiative, which would require a 25 cent increase in the tobacco tax.

In addition to this the Planning and Conservation League is continuing its legislative work and is now looking at more than 400 bills.

They were instrumental in stopping a bad bill which would have voided recent court decisions on the public trust by requiring a 50 year moratorium before the decisions could be implemented. In effect such a bill would allow the resource to be destroyed or depleted before the public trust was recognized.

They also mounted enough opposition to persuade State Parks to reverse its decision on allowing off-road vehicles in Anza Borrego Desert State Park.

The PCL Board approved the following priorities for 1988-1989:

Conditional approval of the nomination of Pete Bontadelli as Director of Fish and Game while expressing concerns about the mountain lion hunt and DFG wetlands policy.

Water development issues particularly the Bay/Delta system be given highest priority. Water conservation and marketing were also to be given high priority. The Board would have to approve any legislative bill in advance.

A poll on transportation would be funded to see if a public rail transit bond issue would have enough support.

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Yosemite Park is the southernmost point in the world where the great gray owl can be found regularly. To some extent this helps explain why the owl is considered endangered in California but researchers are now at work to determine if there are other causes.

## BIRDING IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

Peter Metropulos

### AUGUST OBSERVATIONS

Three **BLACK SCOTERS** in Princeton Harbor, August 8, (RSTh) furnished us with one of the few recent summer records for this uncommon sea-duck.

Migrant **OSPREY** flew south over Pescadero Marsh on August 12 and 14 (RSTh).

A lone **PEREGRINE** haunted shorebirds at Pescadero Marsh and nearby Pomponio Beach August 2 (RSTh) and another was at Año Nuevo Point August 27 (GJS).

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** numbered 20 in Pescadero Marsh August 28 (PJM), a respectable count for anywhere in the state.

A **SOLITARY SANDPIPER** at Pescadero Marsh on August 4 (RSTh) was a rare find.

Sharp-eyed "RSTh" produced a juvenal **SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** from a mixed pack of waders at Pescadero Marsh on August 26. It was seen again on August 28 (PJM).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPERS** first arrived at Pescadero Marsh on August 2 (1-RSTh) and five more were at Año Nuevo Point on August 31 (GJS).

Two **PECTORAL SANDPIPERS** arrived at Pescadero Marsh on August 12 (RSTh).

A pelagic species occasionally seen from shore, a **PARASITIC JAEGER** was at Pigeon Point on August 14 (RSTh).

A pair of **PYGMY OWLS** feasting on a young robin and being mobbed by every songbird in the neighborhood, were seen in a La Honda yard on August 7 (BM).

**WESTERN KINGBIRDS** - rather rare coastally in migration - were at Pescadero on August 26 and Año Nuevo Point on August 27 (RSTh).

A group of three **BLACK SWIFTS** were soaring over Año Nuevo Point on August 6 (GJS).

Unusually early on the immediate coast were 11 **VAUX'S SWIFTS** at Año Nuevo Point on August 25 (GJS).

The first major "wave" of migrant warblers hit El Granada on the morning of August 22 (BS) when dozens of **TOWNSEND'S**, **BLACK-THROATED GRAY** and **HERMIT WARBLERS** were observed.

A **NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** at Pescadero Creek on August 22 (RSTh) was an early "vagrant" warbler from the East.

Another early vagrant was a **BOBOLINK** flushed from a weedy dike in Pescadero Marsh on August 28 (PJM).

Two **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS** were found at Pescadero Marsh where they are extremely rare on August 28 (JG) and another visited a feeder in Half Moon Bay all during that same week.

A lone **RED CROSSBILL** was calling from a tall pine in Menlo Park on August 29 (PJM).

On August 30 the first acorn-stashing **SCRUB JAY** was at work in San Carlos. Last year similar behavior was noted on September 1.

### OBSERVERS

(JG) JENNIFER GREEN;  
(PJM) PETER J. METROPULOS;  
(RSTh) RON S. THORN;

(BM) BILL METROPOLUS;  
(GJS) GARY J. STRACHAN;  
(BS) BARRY SAUPPE.

## FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS 1988 ANNUAL MEETING

The Western Field Ornithologists will be holding their annual meeting on Thursday through Sunday October 6-9 in Monterey. The meeting will feature a Breeding Bird Workshop on Friday and the presentation of study papers on Saturday. Pelagic and field trips are scheduled throughout.

For more information please contact Debra Love Shearwater (408) 688-1990.

## LEISURE TIME

If you place your nose on the grindstone rough,  
And keep it down there long enough,  
You'll soon forget there are such things,  
As brooks that babble and birds that sing.  
Your whole world then will soon compose  
Of you, the stone and your ground-down nose.

(Anonymous ...but thanks to Dr. Barrett Anderson for passing it along. Barrett is a true believer, having retired [very early] from dentistry.)

## SPONSORS SOUGHT FOR AUDUBON ADVENTURES

JANET DUERR

Audubon Adventures is a youth program of the National Audubon Society aimed at elementary school children in grades three to six. The program includes a bimonthly publication, a teacher's guide with activity ideas and background information, and student membership cards and decals. The enrollment fee is \$25 per classroom (up to 32 students). Last year, over 216,000 children in 7,200 classrooms were enrolled nationwide. Sequoia Audubon Society asks you to consider sponsoring a classroom for the current school year. If you would like to participate, send a check for \$25, made out to Sequoia Audubon Society, to the SAS office, along with a note indicating that the money is for the Audubon Adventures program. If you wish, you may specify that your sponsorship is for a particular school or teacher. Also, if you are an elementary school teacher and would like your class to be sponsored, contact the SAS office to enter your request.

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