

sequoia needles

Bulletin of the
March, 1989

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

San Mateo County, Ca.

Vol. 37, #6

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

Paul Jones, a naturalist, sailor, and biology teacher, will give us this month's program on beautiful Southeast Alaska. Paul is a leader for Intersea Research, a tour and research group based in Friday Harbor, Washington. His trips focus especially on the rare and mysterious humpback whales, found off the Alaskan coast. He will discuss the natural history of this spectacular region, while showing slides of the whales, birds and scenery. He will also present a ten minute video on the humpbacks at sea.

Paul is a member of Sequoia Audubon and of the Oceanic Society. He has participated on many of our Christmas Counts and has led tours and taught birding and wildlife classes from Alaska to the Sierra Nevada.

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM

April will feature a program on Audubon Canyon Ranch. John Kelley and/or Skip Schwartz, naturalists from the ranch, will tell us about activities at the reserve at Cypress Grove in Tomales Bay and at the heronry in Bolinas.

THE ENDANGERED SPECIES OF CALIFORNIA



*The San Joaquin Kit Fox
one of 252 native
California species at risk*

**You can help them survive
by filling in LINE 45
on your State Tax Return.**

California has more than 250 animal and plant species that face the threat of extinction. We urge you to help them survive with a tax-deductible contribution on LINE 45 of your State Tax Return.
Please help if you can. The loss of just one living species hurts us all.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

CLIFF RICHER AND GAIL SMITHSON

For the first time in many years, Sequoia Audubon Society has decided to become an active partner in a law suit. The Board unanimously undertook this step because we felt the issues at question were vital to the preservation of the few remaining wetlands in the Bay Area.

The case in question is a complex one which has already been adjudicated at the Federal District Court Level. At immediate issue are 153 acres of wetlands in Newark. These acres were once salt ponds but when the new Dumbarton Bridge was being built, Caltrans took a portion and penetrated the dikes on the remainder. These areas are now a tidal wetland with the tides entering and draining the marshes through pipes installed in the dikes by the state. (This situation also prevails on the San Mateo County side of the bridge and in many other areas around the Bay.) Leslie Salt Company, the owner of the land wishes to sell the land to the highest bidder. The Corps of Engineers maintains that - as wetland - the proper disposition of this property comes under its jurisdiction. In his ruling Judge Charles Legge decided that the property is not wetlands since they would have remained salt ponds without the action of a government agency (Caltrans). In his ruling the judge chose to disregard the difference between state and federal government agencies, the status of the land prior to Leslie Salt's diking, the presence of endangered species and even the existence of tides on the Bay!

The Corps of Engineers has appealed this decision and has been joined in its appeal by the Committee to Save the Bay, the Committee to Complete the Refuge, the Sierra Club and a number of Bay Area Audubon chapters including Sequoia Audubon. We have chosen to ally ourselves with the Corps of Engineers in this cause. We feel that the judge's decision on such narrow grounds opens the door - not only to the sale of these 153 acres to developers - but to the wholesale conversion of any minuteley altered wetlands to industrial districts and parking lots. We feel that it is necessary for us to have a legal presence in this suit, not just to show our support of the Corps of Engineers, but also to be sure that the appeal would continue even if the Corps were to withdraw or seek a negotiated settlement which might be contrary to the public interest.

If the appeal were to be lost or negotiated to the advantage of Leslie Salt Company, the first loser would be the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The cost to complete the Refuge through land acquisition would be increased enormously. The present easements and land-use agreements the Refuge has with Leslie Salt would assume a new value, and their renewal would be endangered. Other tidal wetlands could become subject to similar broad decisions based on limited circumstances.

If this decision is allowed to stand we feel that the life and health of the Bay - already seriously threatened - is doomed. We owe it to the Bay, to our descendants and to ourselves to commit our slim resources against the forces which would destroy the bay --- forever.

CALENDAR

March 1989						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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MAR. 2 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 room to accommodate everyone.

MARCH 8 PRINCETON HARBOR FIELD TRIP - The only sheltered
WEDNESDAY harbor between Santa Cruz and San Francisco, Princeton Harbor is winter home to a good variety of bay ducks, loons, cormorants and other divers as well as gulls and shorebirds. Not only does the harbor usually have one or two surprises, but the nearby willows, cypresses and grasslands have proven to be first-rate warbler traps. Clay-colored sparrows, palm and prairie warblers are only a few of the species that have wintered here the last few years. To get there take Hwy. 92 to Hwy. 1 and follow Hwy. 1 north to Capistrano Rd. and turn left at the lights. Take your first left and proceed straight ahead into the upper parking lot where we will meet at 9:00 A.M. This will be a walking trip along the beach and rocks with some areas of broken footing, so boots or sturdy shoes are recommended. The trip should break up at noon. PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM LAST MONTH'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

MARCH 9 GENERAL MEETING. ALASKA with Paul Jones. Whales, THURSDAY marine mammals and sea birds dominate Paul's views of the Arctic wilderness. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 PM, General Meeting begins at 8:00. See Page One for further details.

MARCH 12 MOUNTAIN VIEW FOREBAY AND SHORELINE PARK. This
SUNDAY area affords some of the most varied shorebird and waterfowl wintering habitat in a small area and in every year it has produced a surprise bird or two. The trip will involve walking on level well-defined paths. We will meet at 9:00 AM at the foot of San Antonio Rd. near the entrance to Mountain View Shoreline Park. To get there, take Hwy. 101 to San Antonio Rd. and take the San Antonio Rd. (North) exit. Follow San Antonio Road for a short way until it makes a right angle turn and becomes Terminal Road. Stop and park as close to the intersection as feasible. Trip breaks up at noon.

LEADER LINDA KYPTA 591-9053

MAR. 18-19 BODEGA BAY, THE RUSSIAN RIVER, AND BLUE GROUSE.
SATURDAY The trip will begin at 9:00 AM in the parking lot & SUNDAY of the Tides Restaurant in Bodega Bay. This is a 2-2 hour drive from San Mateo. Those not wanting to try the drive that morning can find overnight lodging in Petaluma (inexpensive) or Bodega Bay (not so inexpensive). We will spend Saturday morning around Bodega Harbor. In the afternoon, we'll make our way up the coast to the mouth of the Russian River, and bird the woods in that vicinity. We will spend the night camping at Salt Point State Park, 25 miles up the coast (alternate accommodations are available). We will get an early start Sunday morning in order to search for the booming Blue Grouse, the highlight species of the trip, along Hauser Bridge and King Ridge Roads. In addition to the grouse, the scenery in this area is magnificent. The trip will officially end at about noon near the town of Monte Rio on the Russian River; however, if anyone is interested, we may make a few stops during the afternoon on the way back to the Bay Area. Call the SAS office (593-7368) for directions, accommodations information and a schedule.

LEADER STEVE SCHAFER 689-0788
PAGE TWO

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

DAN MURPHY

The Ranch opens its public season Saturday, March 18. Hike the trails, view the heronry sit by the creek, picnic in the ranch yard or birdwatch from the blind. Located three miles north of Stinson Beach on Highway One, Audubon Canyon Ranch is the sanctuary sponsored by your Audubon chapter. Take advantage of this wonderful resource and spend a day or several at our sanctuary. Perhaps the best to enjoy it is to make several visits during our public season.

Come out during March when the Great Blue Herons are about a month into their nesting cycle. The great egrets will still be courting, defending territories, building nests and laying eggs. Spring wildflowers will be in bloom and the trails will be uncrowded. Search the old growth forests for the elusive spotted owl during March and early April. Perhaps this is the year you will dare to pick up a newt or even a banana slug.

By late April or early May, it may be time for a second visit. The herons will have young in the nests. Egret should be abundant, and the first young egrets should be hatching. Courtship behavior may still be observed in both species. A few wildflowers may still be observed in both species. A few wildflowers may still adorn our trails: territorial birds will sing from the forests and chaparral. Plan your trip for a low morning tide. Get to the Ranch around 10 A.M., hike one of the three mile loop trails and witness the beauty of Bolinas Lagoon when its shallows are gleaming black, ribboned by silver streams. If you are really lucky, the fog will be in when you emerge from the forest, and it will break as you walk down the open slope. The sight before you is mystical in its beauty.

June and July spell the end of the breeding cycle. Now the nestlings are ready to fly, and if you are patient and lucky you may see one of the great birds take its first flight. Like the cartoon characters Launchpad or Loon, you never quite know how or when they may land. It is amazing to think these lanky, unhinged birds will be the graceful hunters and fliers of our marshes by fall. The hills will be dry, but the beauty of transition is obvious. If you have taken the time to see the season progress from its beginning to end your year will be richer and you'll be anxious to experience the Ranch next year.

Our public season will close on Sunday, July 16.

Join us at your sanctuary, Audubon Canyon Ranch.

(Continued on Page Three)

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

ACR welcomes our new Weekend Coordinator Tom Queer. Tom will help weekend hosts organized, interpret the Ranch for our groups, greet visitors and do a few thousand other things Ranch visitors take for granted. He may not know it yet, but he will become quite the authority on all those things small children find under logs and rocks. Tom has a background in biology and has been a permanent Ranch employee for several years. It is pretty apparent he will be a great addition to our weekend program.

Edris Cole, long-time ACR Administrative Coordinator, will join our weekend staff this year as well. You can welcome her when you visit the bookstore. Edris is one of the delightful people who answer the phone at the Ranch so here's a chance to meet the person at the other end of the line.

Skip Schwartz, Ranch Manager, continues in that job. However as the Ranch has grown to include three major sanctuaries and a number of smaller ones, a major provider of outdoor education, and a conservation organization of some significance. Skip's responsibilities and role in ACR have grown too. The focus of his responsibilities will shift to weekdays. Those of us who are weekend visitors will miss seeing him. But we know he is applying the same energy and effort to managing the Ranch as he did managing the weekend program. Thanks Skip. Thanks for all those years you coordinated the public program at the Ranch. You did such a wonderful job that my kids, and no doubt many others, call ACR "Skip's place". Your work on weekends and holidays has made the goals of ACR and its sponsoring Audubon Chapters reality. You have enriched the Ranch experience for many of its visitors and our incredible success is due in no small part to you.

FIELD TRIP CHANGES

Please note the following changes in the field trip calendar:

The Princeton Harbor field trip scheduled for Thursday, March 9, has been moved to Wednesday, March 8. All other details remain the same.

The Yosemite field trip, scheduled for April 22 and 23, has been postponed until September. The exact date has not yet been set, but will be listed in the May newsletter.

WORLD OF AUDUBON

The next World of Audubon TV special is on poaching and illegal trafficking in wildlife. It airs on Superstation TBS on Friday, March 3 at 7:50 PM, Tuesday, March 21 at 9:50 PM and Sunday, March 26 at 7:00 PM. Richard Chamberlain is the narrator. (All times are for our zone.)

CALENDAR

April 1989						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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APRIL 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 room to accommodate everyone.

APRIL 8 AÑO NUEVO/WADDELL CREEK FIELD TRIP. Gary Strachan
SATURDAY will lead us on a field trip to one of these two areas. Actual selection of the field trip area will be up to the leader right up to starting time of the trip and will be conditioned on birding, weather and trail conditions. We will meet in the parking area of the Año Nuevo State Reserve at 9:00 AM. Wear clothing suitable for coastal birding at this time of year. Sturdy shoes or boots are recommended. The trip should break up at noon.

LEADER

GARY STRACHAN

APRIL 7-9 CALIFORNIA-NEVADA AUDUBON CHAPTER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE. A Blueprint for Audubon Action in 1989.
SUNDAY A special gathering of NAS chapter leaders from throughout Nevada and California. The program will feature a blending of workshops and presentations using the protection of the desert as a case study for learning skills that will be of great value to the many other conservation issues we face in Audubon. NAS President Peter Berle and other officers and staff members of National Audubon will be in attendance. Conference begins with Friday night registration at 6 P.M. Saturday and Sunday sessions begin at 9:00 AM. Registration fee is \$18 which includes all conference activities. Meals are separate and overnight accommodations are up to attendees. Any member may attend. Call the Western Regional Office (1-916-481-5332) for more details.

APRIL 9 BIRDING SAIL -- SPONSORED BY THE AUDUBON AND
SUNDAY OCEANIC SOCIETIES. Leaving from various marinas in the San Francisco Bay area at 9 AM & returning by 6 PM. Bring your own snack food and a pot luck dish for lunch. Wear warm (layered) clothing and bring appropriate white-soled or foul weather duck shoes and binoculars. Cost of the sail - for members of the Oceanic Society - \$15; non-members - \$20 (includes a one-day membership in the Society). Persons selected as docents will not be charged. To reserve your space as a guest or as a birding docent (one per boat) call the Oceanic Society office at 441-5970 or Ann Splittgerber at 823-1363. See the separate article for further details.

APRIL 13 GENERAL MEETING. AUDUBON CANYON RANCH - THE
THURSDAY TOMALES BAY PRESERVE will be the main subject of our program. This little known preserve of ACR is still partially in private ownership and is therefore not open to the general public. Enjoy this opportunity to visit (at second-hand) this jewel of the ACR crown. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Social Mixer at 7:30 PM, General Meeting begins at 8:00.

APRIL 16 MINES ROAD FIELD TRIP. An auto caravan through an
SUNDAY isolated valley where relict populations of birds linger on despite the destruction of their habitats in the Central and Livermore Valleys. Phainopepla, Lewis' woodpecker, Lawrence's goldfinch, golden eagle and prairie falcon are near certainty while roadrunner, wood duck, purple martin, wild turkey, Costa's and calliope hummingbirds, rufous-crowned, sage and grasshopper sparrows

(Continued on Page Four)

CALENDAR

(Continued from Page Three)

are likely. Yet, despite its seeming isolation, you will never be more than 45 minutes away from either Livermore or Interstate 5 so that you can break away and return to civilization at any time. This is an all-day trip, ending at dusk, so bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable, with temperatures in the last four years varying between 40 and 90 degrees. There are only two reliable restroom facilities, at lunchtime and at mid-afternoon; and no service stations until I-5 so be prepared. To get there, cross the San Mateo Bridge and follow the signs to I-580. Stay on 580 for about 23 miles to the North Livermore Ave. exit. Take a right at the exit and follow Livermore Avenue through the center of town where it becomes South Livermore Ave. Approximately a half mile beyond the center of town you will see the Nob Hill Shopping Center on the left. We will meet in the parking lot and leave there promptly at 8:30 A.M. Late arrivals will have no problem in catching up with the group if they continue on S. Livermore Ave. until it becomes Tesla Rd. and then take a right on Mines Road less than a mile from the meeting place.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 355-4058

APRIL 30 JASPER RIDGE BIOLOGICAL PRESERVE AND SEARSVILLE LAKE. The field trip to this unique biological preserve will highlight nesting birds and the wild flowers unique to serpentine soils. Possible sightings include wood ducks, blue-gray gnatcatchers, ash-throated flycatchers and black-headed grosbeaks. We will meet at the Stanford University Jasper Ridge Main Gate (not the Whiskey Hill Gate) at 8:00 A.M. Meet promptly as the gate will be open only from 7:45 to 8:15 A.M. From I-280 take the Sandhill Road exit west about 2 miles to a gate on the left side of the road. We will go rain or shine. A user fee of \$3 per person (checks preferred) is required. The size of the group is limited so please call the office (593-7368) early for this reservations only field trip. For additional information, call the leader.

LEADER LOUISE FLETCHER 591-6804

COSTA RICA TRIP

Dan Guthrie, President of Pomona Valley Audubon Society, will lead a three week trip to Costa Rica in June. Dan has led a number of trips to Costa Rica before and knows the tropical birds well.

The cost of the trip is \$2300, a portion of which is a tax-deductible contribution.

For more details contact Daniel A. Guthrie, Joint Science Department, Claremont College, Claremont, CA 91711 (Telephone 1-714-621-8000)

BIRDING ON THE BAY

The San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Oceanic Society has proposed a joint Audubon-Oceanic field trip on San Francisco Bay, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, April 9. Several sailboats (25'-60'), will depart from various ports around the Bay at approximately 9:00 am. On board will be an experienced birder who will have the responsibility of identifying for the other passengers on board the various birds seen during the trip. After a morning of sailing and birding, the boats will converge at Treasure Island Cove to have lunch and compare notes. The trip is open to any interested persons; sailing and/or birding experience are not required. The fee will be \$15 per person for members of the Oceanic Society or \$20 per person for non-members.

If you are interested in participating, either as an 'expert birder' or as a passenger, please contact Steve Schafer at 689-0788 for complete details.

VISIT AUDUBON CANYON RANCH!

You can read about Audubon Canyon Ranch in this newsletter every month in "News from the Ranch" column written by Dan Murphy. The season is approaching when you can visit the ranch and its heronry and appreciate its beauty in person. Audubon Canyon Ranch will be open to the public on weekends and holidays from March 18 through July 16 this year. When the ranch opens in March, the Great Blue Herons should be on their nests and the Great Egrets should be visiting the colony. By the beginning of May, the Great Blue's should have young in their nests and the Great Egrets nests should be well established. Members of Sequoia Audubon Society are greatly encouraged to visit the ranch during the month of May, when our chapter is responsible for providing hosts at the entrance station.

Although Audubon Canyon Ranch has permanent personnel, the operation of the ranch depends to a large extent upon the work of volunteers. In particular, members of the local Audubon Chapters act as hosts to welcome visiting groups to the ranch, freeing the ranch naturalists to concentrate on informing the visitors about the specifics of the herons' and egrets' behaviors. The task of hosting is not very difficult, but is very rewarding. When you arrive at the ranch in the morning, one of the ranch naturalists will greet you and carefully explain your 'duties'. In general, you greet arriving visitors and direct them to parking, the shop, and the trails. You do not need to be an expert on birds; you do need to enjoy being outside most of the day. The hosts switch off duties with each other during the day so that everyone has a chance to go up to the rookery and watch the herons and egrets and their young up close. Interacting with the visitors is a real pleasure - everyone is enjoying themselves and is genuinely interested by the impressive rookery. You can feel smug because you are helping out in a worthy cause, by helping to inform and interest the public in our natural world, yet at the same time you can really enjoy being in such a beautiful place, watching the activities of such beautiful birds. Please consider volunteering to be a host for this coming season! If you are interested in hosting or if you need more information, please call the Sequoia office at 593-7368 or call Janet Duerr, the ACR Host coordinator, at 689-0788. If you want to learn more about the ranch and the herons and egrets, don't miss April's program, which will be presented by a naturalist from Audubon Canyon Ranch.

BLUE SEED

Birds do not like the color blue, so to keep them from eating freshly planted seed, soak the seeds in water to which a little laundry bluing has been added:

--- Youngstown, Ohio *Vindicator*

TEXAS TRIP

Texas is a must on every birder's travel list with nearly 550 species of birds recorded within its borders. A trip designed to show the rich diversity of bird life within a part of this large state will be led by Maryann Danielson and Jean-Marie Spoelman on April 22-May 6, 1989.

Starting from Houston the tour will travel to the hill country where the target birds will be the golden-cheeked warbler and the black-capped vireo. Then on to the Rio Grande Valley for its specialties - Audubon's and Altamira orioles, green jays and the red-billed pigeon. A visit to the Pineywoods for the red-cockaded woodpecker is also included, but the climax of the trip is the peak of spring migration on the Upper Texas Coast.

The tour is limited to 9 persons. The fee is \$850, which includes lodging (double occupancy), ground transportation and guide services from Houston. Meals are not included. For a detailed itinerary or additional information call Maryann Danielson at 325-9349. Deadline for reservations is March 15.

HABITAT RESTORATION TEAM

The Golden Gate National Park Association is sponsoring a volunteer Habitat Restoration Team.

Each Sunday at 9:30 AM, volunteers help control exotic weeds, stop erosion, restore native vegetation, fix trails or help grow native plants.

To find out about next Sunday's project call the Habitat Hotline at 556-4353.

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 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.

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

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

ALSO AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS AND SOME FIELD TRIPS

GOLDEN TROUT WORKSHOPS

Three one-week Golden Trout Workshops will be held in the Sierra Nevada July 30 through August 19, 1989. It is sponsored by members of the Eastern Sierra, Pasadena, San Bernadino Valley, San Fernando Valley and Santa Barbara chapters of the National Audubon Society. An informal field natural history program consisting of naturalist-led hikes by resident naturalists, will be offered. The camp is located in the Golden Trout Wilderness, in the southern Sierra on the eastern watershed, at an altitude of 10,000 feet. For details, write or call Cindi McKernan, 1230 Friar Lane, Redlands, CA 92373 (1-714-793-7897). Reservations should be made as soon as possible.

DAVID GAINES SCHOLARSHIP

The Golden Trout Committee is pleased to announce the David Gaines Sierra Scholarship. Because David educated and touched so many people about the beauty and natural history of the Sierra, the Committee is providing a scholarship to an individual for attendance at a one-week session at the Golden Trout Workshop. Application is open to anyone who enjoys and is interested in the conservation of the Sierra Nevada. To apply, please submit a 300 word essay regarding your interest in the Sierra Nevada. Deadline is June 1, 1989. Send applications to Cindi McKernan, 1230 Friar Lane, Redlands, CA 92373.



**San Francisco
 Peninsula
 Birdwatching**

CONSERVATION NOTES

GAIL SMITHSON

CASCADE RANCH HEALTH CLUB

Cascade Ranch was recently added to State Parks and is located northeast and adjacent to the Año Nuevo State Reserve. When the State of California was considering acquiring this location as a state park, Assemblyman Bob Naylor felt part of the land should be in private hands in order for the county and the state to receive property taxes. It was agreed that a small parcel of the land would be sold to a private party with the stipulation that the land be used for a campground and/or visitor-serving lodge facility. The theory was that a private developer could provide needed camping facilities more quickly and inexpensively than State Parks could. The majority of the water rights were given to the private parcel to support this facility.

The private parcel is now owned by Paul Gould, Inc. This developer is proposing to build an exclusive exercise resort using the water rights of the adjacent public lands. The arrangement for camping facilities in the Paul Gould, Inc. plan originally called for 240 sites, with the majority of sites equipped with hookups for recreational vehicles, a meeting hall, a motel, cabins, swimming pool, country store, etc. The main attraction however was to be a 130 room lodge, two swimming pools, five tennis courts, a restaurant and extensive indoor gymnasium and sports rooms. At one point, the campsites were dropped entirely and only after a public hearing in January were 50 sites restored to the plan, but with the proviso that Gould retain the right to sell the campground portion if it fails to be profitable. The estimated cost per night for a person using the Cascade fitness center is \$175 - excluding most who would wish to stay overnight in the state park. We feel that this is not a facility which complements and contributes to the unique beauty and resources of the surrounding open space. It is not a visitor facility but an attraction in and for itself.

The San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center, the Sierra Club and several concerned individuals are protesting the proposed health complex and are requesting the project be disapproved. Their objections include:

The manner in which the water rights have been divided between the private and public parcels;

The intensity of use of the fitness center exceeds the density permitted under the Local Coastal Plan;

The inadequacy of the Environmental Impact Report

In a public hearing with the San Mateo County Supervisors on January 24, the turn-out packed the meeting hall. And the discussion became so heated that the Supervisors postponed their decision until too late in February to include in this newsletter.

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY PROPOSED

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has been directed by the Congress to designate Monterey Bay as a National Marine Sanctuary by December 31, 1989. The area extends from Point Sur in Monterey County to our own Pigeon Point and 14.5 nautical miles out to sea. This designation is most important to the populations of elephant seals at Año Nuevo and the endangered sea otters, as well as to migrating and resident whales and to the area's commercial fisheries. Competing for rights within the area are oil and gas interests waiting to bid under the proposed Lease Sale 119. If the Sanctuary designation takes place before the actual lease sale, then oil or gas drilling would be prohibited within the Sanctuary.

DEADLY SPRAY

A two year study of 150 red-tailed hawks in the Sacramento Valley was recently concluded by UC Davis.

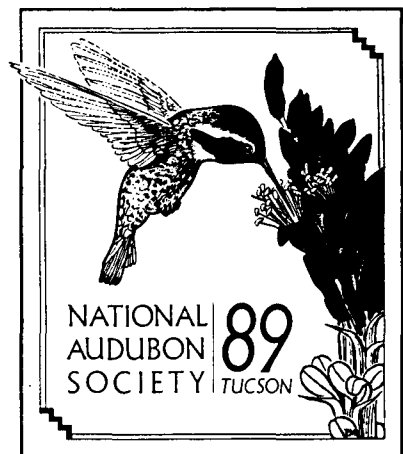
The study showed that dormant winter sprays used in almond orchards are hazardous to migrating and resident hawks. The sprays contain enough toxins to disrupt the central nervous systems of hawks and other resident species.

NATIONAL CHALLENGE AT NAS CONVENTION

"Our Southwest: Challenged by Growth" is the official theme of the convention, which will take place from September 12-16, 1989. The convention organizers point out, the issues particular to the Southwest are also nationwide challenges: water supplies, clean air, protecting natural ecosystems, public lands, wildlife management and more.

To educate Audubon members on these issues, an expert convention planning team is assembling a rich program that will include general sessions, in-depth workshops, natural history trips and informal events. Southwestern arts and crafts, exhibits and displays will also be featured. And special sessions will be devoted to Audubon's national high priority campaigns -- the Clean Air Act, Platte River, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Wetlands and Ancient Forests.

For further information, contact Convention Office, National Audubon, 4150 Darley, Suite 5, Boulder, CO 80303.



BOOK NEST CATALOG NOW AVAILABLE

Richardson Bay Audubon Center's bookstore, The Book Nest, has just published its 1989 mail order catalog of field and site guides for birds, video and audio cassettes for birding and environmental education books. The catalog is free. If you want it mailed by first class postage, please send a twenty-five cent stamp to: THE BOOK NEST, RBAC, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, CA 94920.

CAPE MAY MOURNING

Date: Saturday, 21 May 1983
Place: Higbee Beach, Cape May Point, New Jersey
Target: Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*)
Status: Potential Life Bird
Weapon: Bushnell 'Sportview' 7 X 35 (\$33.95 + tax)

Every spring, Mourning Warblers make their way through the eastern half of North America, enroute to their breeding grounds in the woodlands of the northeastern U.S. and Canada. The Mourning Warbler is one of the latest of the spring migrants, passing through during the last two weeks of May, after most other songbirds have already arrived on their summer territories.

The Mourning Warbler is one of the more difficult birds to see well. Like other members of its genus, it has a well-deserved reputation for being a skulker. Its habitat is thick forest undergrowth, from which the male defiantly sings his loud, clear song, as if to say, "Go ahead, just try and find me." (Actually, he sings "chur-ree chur-ree CHUR-REE CHUR-REE"; I was merely paraphrasing.)

By the spring of 1983, my wife, Janet, and I had been actively birding for a couple of years, but neither of us had yet seen a Mourning Warbler. We decided that it was time to mount a search for this elusive bird. Although Mourning Warblers were occasionally reported quite close to our home in Princeton, New Jersey, we had learned that the best place to see the bird was farther south.

Cape May forms the extreme southeastern tip of New Jersey, at approximately the same latitude as Washington, D.C. The area is famous as a birding hot spot; it even has a bird named after it. Cape May is particularly renowned for its fall migration of hawks and songbirds, but birding there in the springtime can be very rewarding as well. Higbee Beach is an area of Cape May that is known as an outstanding place to see small songbirds, especially vireos and warblers. The name perhaps conjures up images of grass-covered sand dunes, and indeed there are dunes to be seen. But the best birding is located a few hundred yards in the lee of the dunes, where the vegetation turns to shrubby growth, small trees, and thickets. Here is where Mourning Warblers were to be found, or so we hoped.

I had prepared for the expedition by listening to a recording of the bird's song, over and over, and committing it to memory. I knew that our only chance of ever seeing a Mourning Warbler rested on our ability to find a male by hearing it sing.

Janet and I began our journey to Cape May early Saturday morning; it would be a two-hour drive, and we wanted to arrive at our destination by daybreak. We always regarded a trip to Cape May as a major adventure, not to be undertaken without serious consideration. Not that Cape May was such an exotic place; rather, it was because our car had a mean time between failures scarcely longer than the expected duration of the trip (we were both students).

We performed all the proper pre-trip rituals and recited the appropriate incantations, and managed to survive the journey without experiencing any significant mishaps. Of course, the clutch cable did break as we were entering the Cape May Lighthouse parking lot, but at least we were already in Cape May. If we had to, we could walk

to Higbee Beach from there. We always kept a spare clutch cable in the trunk, and the incident did at least give Janet the opportunity to learn how to replace the cable, a task that I had performed on three previous occasions.

After replacing the cable, we checked the bird sighting log at the Lighthouse headquarters, and learned that three Mourning Warblers had been seen the day before. Our spirits revived, we next made our way to Higbee Beach.

We were the first birders to arrive at Higbee Beach that morning, so it appeared that we would need to locate a Mourning Warbler on our own. The air was filled with the songs of Wood Thrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos, not to mention a dozen or more songs I couldn't identify. I hoped that I would be able to pick out the song of a Mourning Warbler from the overwhelming background concert.

We walked along a trail towards the beach, taking note of the many species we were seeing and hearing. Then it happened: "chur-ree chur-ree CHUR-REE CHUR-REE," echoed through the trees, from a spot low in the undergrowth, directly to our right. We stopped and looked at each other. The song was unmistakable. Wordlessly, we moved in an effort to encircle the bird as best we could. Janet walked down the trail while I walked back, both of us peering into the thick brush for telltale movements.

I saw what I thought might be the bird in question, low in a tangle of vines, about fifteen feet in. I knelt down to get a better look, but I couldn't find it again. I continued scanning the brush.

Janet was about thirty feet down the trail when she spotted the bird. "I've got it!" The tone of her voice was one of excitement, but touched with anxiety. She couldn't see me, and wasn't sure quite where I was; she didn't know if she could avoid losing the bird before I got to her.

I sprinted down the trail, covering most of the distance between us in about three milliseconds, when she looked at me and uttered the awful words, "It just hopped back in--towards where you were."

I stopped as if I had encountered a brick wall, and that feeling of anguish that every birder dreads came over me: EVERYONE ELSE HAS SEEN THE BIRD EXCEPT ME. True, in this case, "everyone else" consisted of exactly one other person, but the feeling was there nonetheless.

When that morning had begun, I had wanted to see a Mourning Warbler, I had hoped to see a Mourning Warbler, I had yearned to see a Mourning Warbler. But in a split second, all that had completely changed. For now, I HAD to see a Mourning Warbler.

(To Be Continued)

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If a large tract of critical wetland habitat was threatened to be dredged or filled, the public outcry would be deafening. But we don't lose habitat in large tracts. We lose it in small parcels, each of which is argued to be insignificant, and as such, slips away without our notice. But the cumulative effect of these small amounts is proving to be catastrophic. --- Eldon Gray

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Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed?
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 Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the flock?
 Or do you meet in private and criticize and knock?

Do you take an active part to help the work along?
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--- Anonymous

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