



sequoia needles

Bulletin of the

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

San Mateo County, CA.

May, 1989

Vol. 37, #8

FROM THE PRESIDENT

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM

Janet Duerr, board member and program coordinator of Sequoia Audubon Society, has scheduled herself for this month's program. Janet has travelled widely in the lower 48 states on birding trips. She will present a program on one of the United States' most exciting bird watching destinations, southern Florida.

Last spring, she was present in the Dry Tortugas, a small group of islands south of Key West, during "the best migratory bird fallout in ten years". She took advantage of the opportunity for many close-up photos of colorful eastern migratory songbirds. Her slide show will highlight some of these birds, as well as photos of the elegant waterbirds and other animals of the Everglades. The meeting is at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside with the social mixer beginning at 7:30 PM, and the General Meeting at 8:00.

NEXT MONTH'S PROGRAM

Joe Morlan will present the program at our June potluck. Joe is an extraordinary birder, teaches several bird identification classes, and is the voice and brains of the "Northern California Rare Bird Alert". His slide program will feature the flycatchers of California. And don't forget that June is Potluck time. So brush up on your favorite dishes. The Potluck begins at 6:30 PM, the General Meeting immediately after.

1989 CANDIDATES

The Nominating Committee of Rick Baird, John Silliman and Al Wofchuck has named the following candidates for officers and directors for 1989.

For President	Gail Smithson
For Vice-President	Janet Duerr
For Secretary	Ed Mc Elhany
For Treasurer	OPEN
For Directors	
Term expiring June '91	Colleen Horner
Term expiring June '92	Linda Kypta
Term expiring June '92	Rick Johnson

As yet, the Nominating Committee has been unable to find a suitable (and willing) candidate for Treasurer. If you have a smattering of bookkeeping or accounting background and an interest in Sequoia Audubon, WE NEED YOU. Please call Rick Baird (574-1067) to volunteer or to suggest a suitable candidate.

CLIFF RICHER

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: My special thanks to the Nominating Committee, Chairman Rick Baird, Al Wofchuck and John Silliman for an outstanding slate of candidates. All of the nominees are familiar to us. Gail Smithson has been a Director and Vice-president. Janet Duerr - although she has been living in Sonoma and Contra Costa counties - is one of our most active members, a Director, Chairwoman of the Education Committee, field trip leader, Program Chair, and co-chair of the ACR Hosting Committee. Ed McElhany has done an outstanding job as our ACR representative for years and as our Recording Secretary for the last two years. Linda Kypta has been Program Chair and did a truly remarkable job as President for two years and she goes beyond the call of duty as Hospitality Chairwoman by hosting the Board meetings at her home. Rick Johnson has headed the all-important Conservation Committee for six years and has been a Director for the last three. And Coleen Horner came forward and volunteered to be our Treasurer three years ago when we were in dire need.

TREASURER NEEDED; HELP WANTED!: Unfortunately, just as in 1986 we find ourselves without a nominee for treasurer. If you have a minimum of bookkeeping experience or training, a willingness to take responsibility and a desire to sit on the Board of Sequoia Audubon, we need you! You'll get plenty of help as we will have at least two former treasurers sitting on the Board (and probably three) ready to provide advice and counsel. If you want to know what the job entails then call Colleen Horner (366-4282) or Nick Coiro (349-1834) who will be able to answer any questions you might have. And when you're ready to volunteer, call the office (593-7368), Rick Baird (574-1067) or me, Cliff Richer (355-4058).

SAME OLD FACES: There are some who will make the accusation that the nominees are the same old faces that have been on the Board the last few years. Nothing could be further from the truth. When I first became active in SAS nearly seven years ago, Rick Baird was President but none of the other present officers or nominees were on SAS's governing body. We have had numerous changes since then. This is the first time in those seven years that we have not had a new face among the nominees.

There is no lack of potential candidates. But the nominees represent those members who have given outstanding service to the Chapter during the last year and for years before that. These are the doers, the movers and the shakers!

MONO LAKE APPEAL: Mono Lake is still in trouble. The snows and rains were insufficient to raise the lake level high enough to hold its own against the demands of the Los Angeles Basin. So on April 18, National Audubon, the Mono Lake Committee and California Trout filed a preliminary injunction to maintain the level at its current elevation. This represents a new move in the fight to preserve the lake and requires additional funding. If you can help please send a check - earmarked for the Mono Lake effort - to National Audubon Society, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825.

CALENDAR

May 1989						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

MAY 3 FILOLI BACKWOODS FIELD TRIP. This trip will focus **WEDNESDAY** on the birds and wildflowers of Filoli. From southbound Canada Road, take the first right turn (westbound) beyond the Pulgas Water Temple. Meet at the Gate House at 8:30 am. The field trip should end by noon. There will be an entrance fee of \$1.00 per person.

LEADERS FRANK AND JEAN ALLEN 344-9339

MAY 4 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.

MAY 6 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 mile to Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. Turn left on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway and follow the road about two miles to the station.

LEADER AL SEUBERT

MAY 11 GENERAL MEETING. BIRDING SOUTH FLORIDA AND THE THURSDAY DRY TORTUGAS with Janet Duerr. Doctor Duerr will share her experiences in one of the great birding paradises of the United States. Tropical seabirds, shorebirds, unusual waders and eastern warblers all fell victim to Janet's camera and will be there for all of us to enjoy. 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.

MAY 20 SAN PEDRO VALLEY COUNTY PARK FIELD TRIP. This SATURDAY wooded park provides a variety of habitat for migrating and nesting species of forest and grassland birds. Our leader knows the park well and nearly every year he has found one or more vagrant species in the park or its neighborhood. The trip will entail some walking along easy trails. The trip will begin at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of the park and should break up at noon. To get there take Highway 1 to Pacifica and, turn inland at Linda Mar Boulevard. Follow Linda Mar to its end and follow the signs to the park.

LEADER SCOTT SMITHSON

MAY 27-29 SAN JACINTO MOUNTAINS FIELD TRIP. ?????????????? MEMORIAL This trip is tentative because of the leader's DAY WKND commitment to hosting at Audubon Canyon Ranch. Call Janet to determine if there is going to be a trip and to obtain details.

LEADER JANET DUERR 689-0788

(Continued on Page Three)

PCL AUCTION

The Planning and Conservation League is holding its annual auction on May 3 at the Sutter Galleria at 29th and J Streets in Sacramento. Tickets are only \$15. Call the PCL at 1-916-444-8726 for details.

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

DAN MURPHY

Once again the educational efforts ACR and our docents have been recognized for their excellence. National Audubon Society Vice President for Education, Marshal Chase, presented ACR with an award for "Outstanding Education Achievement". It recognizes our "outstanding commitment to education and, in particular, for free docent tours which are offered to schools and other groups" and to the volunteers who conduct those programs. This is a pat on the back for all those who contribute to the ranch, the docents, the officers, directors and advisors, the financial contributors and those who have shaped the ACR philosophy over the years. If you are one of those, give yourself a pat on the back. Congratulations!

It's not too late to host at the Ranch. This is a great way to get to know a little more about our sanctuary. If you haven't already done so, take this opportunity to join the active supporters of ACR. Call Edris at 868-9244 to let her know you would like to join us as a weekend host.

ACR held its annual donor recognition event at the Bouverie Audubon Preserve on Saturday, April 29. This is our way of thanking supporters who donated \$100 or more during the past year. Guests were given guided tours through flowering fields and oak woodlands by Ranch biologists. Later they enjoyed a catered lunch with board members and staff.

The ACR Board of Directors opposes the proposed oil lease off the central California coast. As holders of about 1500 coastal acres on Bolinas Lagoon and Tomales Bay, we are deeply concerned about the potentially catastrophic environmental and economic impacts of oil drilling off our coast. We urge you to join ACR in opposing Oil Lease Sale #119. Please write to your congressional representative and your senators expressing your concern about drilling for oil off the northern California coast and your specific opposition to Oil Lease Sale #119.

Remember, the Ranch remains open until July 16.

VIDEOGUIDE AVAILABLE

We now have The entire set of cassettes for the VideoGuide to Birds of North America which provides video, still and song recordings of 415 of the more common species to be found in North America. As a study guide or simply for enjoyment the VideoGuide provides a new dimension for the bird enthusiast. of the 5 volumes may be rented from the SAS Office for \$5.00 per week. Please call the office (593-7368) to reserve one or all of these cassettes.

SIERRA NEVADA FIELD CAMPUS BIRD CLASSES

San Francisco State University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus near Yuba Pass is offering a series of classes of special interest to birders.

RECORDING BIRD SONGS June 10-18
Greg Budney
Enrollment Closed

FUNCTION OF BIRD SONG June 12-16
Luis Baptista

An exploration of current knowledge and techniques used to study the development and function of bird vocalizations with one of the internationally known experts in the field. Discussion sessions, field observations and experiments will test for recognition of territoriality, predator detection and other behavior.

BIRDS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA June 12-16
Dave Shuford

Identification, natural history and ecology of the birds of the Sierra Nevada by one of the state's and PRBO's premier researchers. Explore coniferous and mixed forests, high deserts and the Sierra Valley wetlands for a spectacular variety of bird life.

NATURE ILLUSTRATION June 19-23
Keith Hansen

Prerequisite: College course in biology or consent of the instructor. Drawing is a tool for learning, observation and communication. Illustrated lectures, field work and critiques. Various media will be explored to enhance perception and learn techniques of biological illustration. (The instructor is a nationally published illustrator and is best known locally as the artist who produced the best known and most widely reproduced drawing of the Foster City smew of a few years past.)

Cost of the courses is \$105 each. Contact Field Campus Director Jim Steele for further information. (415) 338-1571 or (415) 759-0970.

DESERT TORTOISE

In November 1988, the Bureau of Land Management released a Rangewide Plan for the management of the desert tortoise - thereby avoiding legal action by the Defenders of Wildlife.

The Defenders accept that the plan is a good one and are anxious to see it put to work. Unfortunately it seems that the BLM is more committed to planning than to action and is not moving with the urgency required by tortoise declines.

The Defenders are asking you to write the BLM to urge an end to wildlife grazing in tortoise habitats until the populations recover and a permanent ban to off-road vehicle use in these areas. Write to Bob Burford, Director, Bureau of Land Management, 18th and C Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20240.

CALENDAR (Continued from Page Two)

June 1989						
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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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JUNE 1 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.

JUNE 3 GAZOS CREEK AND BUTANO STATE PARK. The riparian
SATURDAY corridor of Gazos Creek is one of the finest year-round birding areas of San Mateo County. From its mouth, where resting gulls and terns roost, to its origins in the redwoods the creek is a summer home to a large number of passerine species and a representative population of hawks and owls. For even more diversity, we will also bird Butano State Park and the grasslands between the two areas. We will meet at the intersection of Hwy. 1 and Gazos Creek Road, just south of the Pigeon Point Lighthouse at 9:00 A.M. The trip should break up at lunchtime. Our leader is our Christmas Count coordinator, the author of our "Birding" column and one of the best birders to be found anywhere.

LEADER: PETER METROPULOS 592-2417

JUNE 8 GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK. FLYCATCHERS are the
THURSDAY subject of our program with Joe Morlan, noted expert in bird identification, and the voice of the Northern California Rare Bird Alert, giving us the latest details on identifying these elusive and difficult species. The meeting is at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside with the Potluck beginning at 6:30 PM, and the General Meeting immediately after.

JUNE 17 YUBA PASS - "THE CALL OF THE HIGH SIERRA" - This
JUNE 18 trip affords a chance to see birds rarely seen on
SATURDAY any of our other field trips. The trip features
SUNDAY easy trail walking through lovely mountain and Sierra Valley habitats. On Saturday we will meet at 9 AM at Wild Plum Campground just out of Sierra City and bird the mountain areas for dipper, black-backed woodpecker, evening grosbeak, summer warblers, flycatchers, etc. On Sunday we'll meet at the Summit Campground at 8 AM. From there we will caravan to Sierra Valley to see the birds of the Eastern Slope and Modoc Plateau. Arrangements have been made for us to use the facilities of the Sierra Nevada Field Campus of San Francisco State University. Camping in platform tents with mattresses and cots, hot showers and three meals a day are available for \$21 a day (1988 prices - 1989 rates not available at press time.). Just bring your own bedding. Motels are also available in Sierra City. Reservations are required for this trip and for the accommodations at the Field Campus. Call the leader for details and to make reservations.

LEADER: CLIFF RICHER 355-4058

WANTED-AUDUBON RANCH HOSTS

We are still in need of hosts for ACR for almost every weekend in the May. No experience is necessary; all that is required is a love of nature and the great outdoors. Host duties involve greeting visitors to the preserve, showing them where to park their cars, and explaining to them the few rules that are required to insure their safety and of that of the nesting herons and egrets. If you think you might be able to spare a day of your time sometime this month, please call Janet Duerr at 643-9961 during the day, or 689-0788 in the evening. We need your help!

CONSERVATION NOTES

GAIL SMITHSON

THE CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT

National Audubon and the local chapters are gearing up to launch a large campaign for the California Desert Protection Act. This act would establish a 1.5 million acre Mojave National Park, enlarge and redesignate as national parks, Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments, designate 4.5 million acres in 81 units as elements of the National Wilderness Preservation System, transfer 20,400 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands to Red Rock Canyon State Park, designate a 1920 acre Desert Lily Sanctuary and protect 490 acres in Indian Canyons near Palm Springs. Similar legislation was introduced last year but failed to make it to the floor of the Senate. We are hoping that with some changes this legislation will pass this year. The desert is an easily disturbed habitat where damage takes much longer to heal than in other habitats. Tank tracks from World War II maneuvers can still be seen in the desert today. The SAS Board of Directors has re-affirmed its support for the act and is joining the Audubon Desert Task Force to see that this legislation is passed.

PERMANENT MOUNTAIN LION PROTECTION PROPOSED

The Mountain Lion Preservation Foundation along with the Planning and Conservation League have announced the kick-off of a statewide initiative campaign to stop mountain lion trophy hunting in California forever. The initiative would eliminate hunting of mountain lions and provide needed new funds to acquire diminishing wildlife habitat for deer and endangered species. The group is officially called the California Wildlife Protection Committee and is asking for our support on this initiative effort. If you wish to contribute please make your check payable to California Wildlife Protection Initiative and send it to the California Wildlife Protection Committee, 909 12th Street, Suite 203, Sacramento, CA 95814.

RECYCLING NEWS

Californians Against Waste is urging us to support a new senate bill introduced by State Senator Gary Hart (D-Santa Barbara) which would raise the redemption value under the state recycling law to five cents on beverage containers that fail to reach a 65% recycling rate by the end of 1989. A Los Angeles Times article dated March 20, 1989 reported that California's bottle law was not working. Consumers are returning only 57% of the empty aluminum cans, 33% of the glass bottles and 5% of the plastic containers. More effective recycling of empty cans and bottles would save energy, ease the burden on swollen landfills and reduce litter on roads, beaches and parks. A nickel should do it.

We have been asked to write letters in support of SB1221. We need to write to the following:

Senator Dan McCorquendale, Chairman,
Senate Natural Resources Committee.
Assemblyman Byron Sher, Chairman,
Assembly Natural Resources Committee

Your own Assembly Member and State Senator

All can be reached by addressing correspondence to:
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814

Also please write to Coke, Pepsi and Anheuser-Busch and ask them to stop opposing recycling and litter reduction laws.

August Busch, Pres.	John Fiore, V.P.	Buddy Rogers, V.P.
Anheuser-Busch	Pepsi Cola	Coke California
1 Busch Place	PO Box 3833	1334 S Central
St. Louis, MO 63112	Torrence, CA 90509	Los Angeles, CA 90021

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PRESENTS AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Last month, the education committee met to evaluate several applications for the chapter's scholarship program. The committee is pleased to announce the award of three scholarships.

Ms. Gwen Rozario, a teacher at James B. Flood School in Menlo Park, has been awarded a scholarship to attend "Environmental Education in the Curriculum" this spring at Hayward State University.

Ms. Gina Knuth, a teacher at Costano Elementary School in East Palo Alto, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the course "The Natural Sciences for Teachers" this summer at the Sierra Nevada Field Campus of San Francisco State University.

Ms. Kathryn Smith-Penner, a teacher at Sequoia High School in Redwood City, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the course "Environmental Education--Methods and Materials" this fall at San Jose State University.

We were very pleased by the interest shown by these teachers in increasing the use of environmental material in their classrooms and hope that by sponsoring them in these programs we will increase awareness of ecology among their students for years to come.

The education committee is pleased to announce a recipient of our Environmental Educator award. Ms. Barbara Kelley of Portola School has been very active in using the biological sciences in her curriculum and has reached many students during her years of teaching. We are happy to recognize her efforts with this award, to be presented at the June general meeting.

NAS CONVENTION NEWS

"Our Southwest: Challenged by Growth" is the official theme of the convention, which will take place from September 12-16, 1989.

An outstanding array of topics will be covered by some of the country's best spokesmen during the five day period.

Among those who will be in attendance are Paul Ehrlich and Congressmen Mo Udall and James Kolbe of Arizona.

Over 50 workshops will be held to examine the problems of wetlands, public lands, energy, hazardous waste, agriculture, population, wildlife and education with others concentrating on the skills necessary to meet those problems.

For registration, lodging and field trip information write the Audubon Convention Office, 4150 Darley Avenue, Boulder, CO 80303.

THE AFRICAN CLAWED FROG

CLIFF RICHER

The great white shark has sometimes been characterized as an eating machine. The California Department of Fish and Game however reserves that name for one of our least well-known alien invaders, the African clawed frog.

Only slightly larger than the common pond dweller and Biology class victim (Northern leopard frog, *Rana pipiens*) familiar to all of us, this African native isn't content to sit on its lily-pad and annihilate passing insects. Instead it consumes everything it can reach with its stubby little claws. Insects, lizards, smaller frogs, tadpoles and eggs (including its own) fall victim to its voracious appetite. But fish are its favorite food - particularly the endangered unarmored threespine stickleback.

The frog has no known natural enemies. Bass - even the omnivorous white bass - spit it out. An alligator snapping turtle refused to eat for two weeks after tasting one and a red fox went into cardiac arrest after one bite. The tadpole of the frog however does make tasty eating for predator fish and this keeps the frog from proliferating in larger lakes and rivers. Unfortunately, this is the same factor that makes the stickleback endangered.

It was first brought to California as a laboratory animal and later as an aquarium novelty in the '40s. But when scientists found domestic frogs to be just as useful for pregnancy tests and aquarium owners ended up owning a tank containing one fat frog, its import was stopped. By this time the

damage had been done. Soft-hearted fish fanciers and lazy lab techs had already disposed of uncounted numbers of them into various bodies of water.

The battle against the African frog in Southern California has gone on for ten years without any final results. So far it hasn't become a pest elsewhere, but there isn't any reason why it shouldn't. Cooler weather is not a problem. In West Virginia it has survived in creeks and ponds that have frozen solid. A few years back one was found at Pescadero Marsh and the future of the San Francisco garter snake looked to be in doubt. Fortunately no more have shown up although bullfrogs - also garter snake threats - have shown up periodically.

The lesson to be learned from this and the invasion of other aliens - starlings, house sparrows, white bass, walking catfish, fruit flies, burros, pigs and goats - is when in doubt, don't let it out. Exotic pets or aquarium dwellers have no place in our natural environment. Most of them won't be able to survive but you just might be releasing the next major pest.

MT DIABLO AUDUBON SOCIETY PATCH

Mt. Diablo Audubon Society has produced a new shoulder patch featuring the California Quail.

Patches are available for \$3.00 (tax included). If ordering by mail include 75c/ for mailing and handling for one patch or \$1.00, for multiple patches.

Patches can be ordered from Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, PO Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

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



**San Francisco
Peninsula
Birdwatching**

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
ALSO AVAILABLE AT MEETINGS AND SOME FIELD TRIPS

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

MOUNTAIN VIEW FOREBAY Sunday, March 12

Linda Kypta led a group of 12 members and guests around the shoreline park at Mt. View. Waterfowl numbers were low, as they have been all winter due to last summer's drought. However, the group saw a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as the wintering White Pelicans. The nice weather made the walk to the end of the enclosed ponds a pleasant one.

SONOMA COUNTY March 18-19

Steve Schafer led 11 members and guests of the society on a weekend trip to Sonoma County. The weather on Saturday was truly miserable, with pouring rain most of the day. The group did their birding from their cars, but still managed to see a number of shorebirds and seabirds around Bodega Bay. In the afternoon, the planned itinerary was changed due to flooded roads, so the group spent some time visiting the old Russian establishment at Fort Ross. Most of the group braved the wet weather and camped out at Salt Point State Park, although a few of the wiser souls stayed at a nearby motel. Luckily, Sunday morning was clear and beautiful for birding in the coastal range. A hike up a steep hill was rewarded by two booming male Blue Grouse, the target bird of the trip. When the trip broke up at noon on Sunday, the group had seen a total of 110 species.

WADDELL CREEK Saturday, April 8

Gary Strachan, a ranger at Anzo Nuevo State Park, led a group of Audubon members to an area of the reserve that is not open to the general public. Across Highway 1 from the main part of Anzo Nuevo lies a mixed woodland along a beautiful freshwater stream, Waddell Creek. The group saw numerous songbirds, recently returned to their breeding grounds. They also saw a group of nesting Great Blue Herons in some tall evergreen trees along the creek. Some of the group turned the trip into a day long excursion, enjoying the woodlands in the morning and spending the afternoon at Anzo Nuevo, looking at ocean birds and Elephant Seals.

OCEANIC SOCIETY SAIL Sunday, April 9

The first joint Oceanic Society/Audubon Society sail on San Francisco Bay was a big success. Several members of Sequoia Audubon society participated in the sailing/birding event. Each boat contained a skipper, a crew member, a birding docent, and guests. The weather was hot and sunny with calm seas in the morning for better birding and more wind in the afternoon for better sailing. Six boats left from several harbors around the bay and five rendezvoused in the afternoon at Treasure Island to compare notes and share a potluck lunch. The sixth spent a good part of the day waiting for the tide to lift them off the mud. Although the numbers of birds were low due to the season, the "winning" boat saw 47 species of birds. Participants were also privileged to experience a bird song imitation contest during the rendezvous, with entries including a kookaburra, cardinal, and Stellar's sea lion. Winner was an English cuckoo, sounding suspiciously like a Swiss clock.

MINES ROAD Sunday, April 16

Cliff Richer led 14 birders in a day long caravan along Mines Road, through Puerto Del Valle and back through Corral Hollow Road. The weather was ideal - neither too hot nor too cool - and most of the area's specialties cooperated, the Lewis' woodpeckers putting on a fly-catching display and a prairie falcon executing a spectacular aerial show. Many of the participants had never visited the area before and were dutifully impressed with the geography and the birds.

PLATTE RIVER SPECIAL

Every March 80 percent of the world's sandhill crane population - 500,000 birds - stop over in the Platte River in Nebraska.

"Crane River", the newest Audubon TV Special takes viewers to this rare and awesome happening and takes a hard look at the dangers facing these strange and eerily magnificent birds.

The Platte River, "a mile wide and a foot deep", is a lifeline for farmers and wildlife alike. Already reduced to 30 percent of its former size, the Platte will disappear entirely if some of the dozens of proposed water projects are built.

Saving the Platte is one of National Audubon's high priority campaigns and has devoted its latest television special to this vital issue.

Cable TV subscribers can see "Crane River" on the Turner Broadcasting System (SuperStation TBS) at the following times.

Sunday, May 28	7:00 PM
Saturday, June 3	7:05 PM
Sunday, June 11	8:00 PM
Saturday, June 17	5:05 AM

For those who do not have cable, the program will be shown on Public Television in August.

TAXONOMIC CHANGES IN THE WORKS

Bad news is coming for all those hot-shot birders who pride themselves on being able to recite the checklist in taxonomic order. With minor adjustments (always accompanied by major groans and complaints), the taxonomic order has remained virtually unchanged for fifty years.

Charles Sibley and Jon Ahlquist have been studying bird proteins and their DNA for years. The results - partially published in the July 1988 issue of *The Auk* - will be a major reorganization of bird species.

One of the more startling developments is the lumping of herons, shorebirds, loons, grebes, pelicans, penguins, hawks and shearwaters into a single family!

A forthcoming book by Sibley, Ahlquist and Burt Monroe will give all the details of the proposed new order. We expect there will be a good deal of argument and controversy and some changes before the A.O.U. finally adopts it, but the weight of scientific evidence is on the side of change. In another five or ten years your field guide will not only be obsolete, but downright quaint!

CAPE MAY MOURNING, PART TWO

STEVE SCHAFFER

The reader may recall that when we left off, Janet and I were birding in the woods at Higbee Beach in Cape May, New Jersey. Janet had just seen a Mourning Warbler; I hadn't.]

"chur-ree, chur-ree, CHUR-REE, CHUR-REE"

The call echoed through the trees and snapped me out of my slight daze. Janet was right; the bird had flown back down the trail and was now near the spot where I had been looking for it moments earlier.

We walked back to where I had been standing. I surveyed the vegetation: for at least fifty feet in either direction, there was a solid wall of greenbrier at the edge of the trail; beyond that was a slight clearing, where the brush was more open. (For those not familiar with greenbrier, just imagine what barbed wire would look like if it were alive.)

I thought I might be able to see the bird if I could just crawl in under the greenbrier fence and get a good view of the clear area. I got on my hands and knees and slowly started pushing my way through the vines. With every movement I seemed to snag another portion of my shirt or puncture another area of my back and arms.

Unbeknownst to me, Janet had wandered a few feet up the trail. I was just about far enough through the greenbrier to be able to see into the clearing when she called out, "Here he is! He's over here!" Instinctively, I tried to back my way out of the tangle as quickly as I could, but the feeling of a dozen sharp needles being thrust into my back reminded me that slow motion was the rule.

I was faced with a dilemma: Should I sacrifice my body to see this bird, or should I save myself but risk missing it? It took only a fraction of a second to decide to commit the sacrifice, but then Janet called out again, "He's gone; he went back in." With considerable effort, I eventually managed to extract myself from the greenbrier and was able once again to stand erect.

"chur-ree, chur-ree, CHUR-REE, CHUR-REE"

I sighed and looked at Janet. "I'll go around the other side and see if there's a better place to see from," she volunteered. I nodded my concurrence and began scanning the undergrowth once again.

Every birder has a nemesis, a species that for some reason always manages to elude him. It is usually an embarrassingly common species, one that other birders have seen easily. I was beginning to wonder if perhaps the Mourning Warbler was to be that bird for me.

CALIFORNIA GULLS

But in the latter part of May, when the fields had put on their brightest green, there appeared a visitation of vast swarms of crickets, black and baleful as the locust of the Dead Sea. When everything was most disheartening and all effort spent, behold, from over the lake appeared myriads of snow-white gulls, their origin and purpose alike unknown to the new-comers! Verily, the Lord had not forgotten to be gracious! ---Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 1891

"chur-ree, chur-ree, CHUR-REE, CHUR-REE"

From the sound, it was clear that the bird was very near, but the brush was simply too thick to see through. I studied a scraggly hackberry tree that was rooted at the edge of the trail. It sported a low branch, about 4 inches in diameter, that angled out over the brush. Yes, the branch looked a bit rotten, but it would probably support my weight. The higher vantage would let me see past the thickest part of the tangle into the more open area beyond. I had no choice. It was, after all, a life bird.

The branch emerged from the trunk of the tree about eighteen inches above the ground. I placed one foot in the crook of the branch, and half-laid myself out along it. From here, I could see a little better than I could from the trail, but not much. Holding on with one hand, I leaned out as far as I dared, using my free hand to hold my binoculars rather shakily up to my eyes.

It is not clear precisely what happened next, but I do remember hearing a loud crack that came from somewhere in the vicinity of my knees. This was followed by a fleeting sensation of weightlessness, leading in turn to a more definite feeling of panic. In an attempt to minimize bodily damage, I pushed myself away from the falling branch and managed to land surprisingly softly on my back, the vines and shrubs of the thicket cushioning the impact. Of course, the impact of the branch landing across my chest was not particularly pleasant, but all in all, I felt that I came out of the situation rather well.

Lying supine, I looked up to see a leaf dangling a few inches above my face. It was not a remarkable leaf, mind you, but it nonetheless held my interest. It was compound, with three leaflets, each coming to a point and having slightly toothed edges. The surface of the leaf was dark green, and glistened slightly. In other words, it was poison ivy. I didn't have the courage to look more closely at the other leaves that seemed to be enveloping my head and upper body.

I lay there pondering the preceding events for a few seconds before I noticed a slight movement out of the corner of my eye. Shifting my gaze, I saw a twig a few feet above me quivering slightly. A small bird hopped into view. He appeared to be mostly yellow underneath, and a few black flecks obscured the otherwise sharp line separating his gray throat and upper breast from the brightly colored belly. He looked at me, I looked back at him.

"chur-ree, chur-ree, CHUR-REE, CHUR-REE," he said.

I smiled, and in a soft whisper I replied, "Thank you."

RICE

The belief persists that rice should not be thrown at weddings since birds will eat it, and the rice will expand in the bird's stomach, killing it. But no less an authority than the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has declared that rice is not a peril to birds. Sacramento Valley and Gray Lodge Refuge geese eat tons of the stuff left in the fields after harvest. Geese are on the decline for many reasons, but internal explosion is not one of them. Rice won't expand until it's boiled.

WATER RIP-OFF

The US Bureau of Reclamation has released three draft environmental impact statements for proposed water contracts and diversions from the Central Valley Project (CVP). The construction and operation of the CVP has already caused adverse environmental impacts and most of these impacts have never been mitigated. Now the Bureau is proposing to sell the last "surplus" CVP water, primarily to augment supplies for agricultural uses. Unfortunately the Bureau's proposed water sales do not meet the compelling needs of endangered species, migratory waterfowl, fisheries and wildlife refuges for firm water supplies. The management of the Central Valley's wildlife refuges have always depended on surplus "interim" water. There is now a danger that this water will

now be allocated completely and that no water will be available for the refuges!

Letters are needed to the Regional Director, US Bureau of Reclamation, Attn: MP -750, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825-1898. Urge the Bureau to abandon their proposed action because no surplus water should be sold until the needs of endangered species, wildlife refuges, migratory waterfowl and fisheries have been fulfilled through reliable firm water supplies. Please send copies to Representatives Lantos and Campbell and Senators Cranston and Wilson.

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House of Representatives	United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515	Washington, DC 20510

From Defenders of Wildlife "Action Alert".

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