



September, 1995



.. *Revised of Clairmont*



# The S A S Calendar

September

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 - BOARD**

**MEETING** at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead to be sure there will be room.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 - GENERAL MEETING - -**

**IN PRAISE OF THE BUTTERFLY** with Bob Stewart of the Marin Open Space District. Social gathering beginning at 7:30 PM with the meeting and program at 8 PM. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 - POINT REYES FIELD**

**TRIP** - A search through the "warbler traps" of Point Reyes can yield almost anything at this time of year. We'll be looking for inland and eastern vagrants but can expect migrants and some early arriving winter residents as well. Walking will be minimal but sturdy shoes are recommended. Clothing should be layered since the weather on Pt. Reyes is extremely changeable. Fall is normally the most pleasant time of year on the Point but remember that it has the coolest average summer temperature in the continental US. We will meet at the new Point Reyes National Seashore Headquarters building at 9:00 AM. The trip will take place rain or shine. Bring lunch. The trip normally lasts until 2 PM.

**LEADER**

**JUDI SPITLER**

**355-9362**

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 - PHIPPS RANCH FIELD**

**TRIP** - The Phipps Ranch is best known for its outstanding produce stand but in recent years has become renowned as a year-round birding hot spot. At various times this ranch has yielded an astounding varieties of unusual and rare wintering birds. WE'll meet at the Phipps' farm stand at 9 AM. To get there take Hwy 1 to Pescadero Road. Follow Pescadero Road through town until you come to the farm stand. Park away from the farm stand so as to leave the nearer spaces for customers.

**LEADER**

**DAN KELLER**

**726-3306**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - PELAGIC BIRDS FROM**

**SHORE** - Our leader pioneered the concept of pelagic birding from shore. At Pigeon Point the deep-water channel comes closer to shore than at any other point on the Pacific Coast. In addition to the expected shearwaters (at least two species), marbled murrelets and rhinoceros auklets our leader has spotted many rarities from this spot. Meet outside the gate to the lighthouse premises at 9 AM. To get there take Hwy 1 south and take a right at the first lighthouse south (approximately 22 miles) of Half Moon Bay.

**LEADER**

**BARRY SAUPPE**

☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼

Breast muscles account for 30% of a hummingbird's weight, compared to 1% for humans. (No Dolly Parton jokes, please.)



# News From Your Ranch

**Dan Murphy**

**THANK YOU ONE AND ALL!** What an incredible group of volunteers! If you spent a day hosting or if you spent a few weekends working as a Ranch Guide, thank you so much for making our public season a successful one. Introducing the public to a day at Audubon Canyon Ranch is a tradition which creates a positive first impression for our visitors. For that we are grateful to our many hosts. Turning that impression into a meaningful educational experience is the task of our Ranch Guides and for their many hours of work and for their many hours of work and for their incredible success we thank them.]

Ray Peterson and Edris Cole deserve our gratitude as well. They are our paid staff members who worked the weekends and assured that everything went smoothly. The Ranch is nothing more than its volunteers and employees and those very special people make ACR the marvelous success that it is.

**WHAT THE BIOLOGISTS LEARNED LATELY.** If you know Ranch Biologists Ray Peterson, John Kelly, or John Petersen you already know that they know a lot more than anyone else about natural history. After all our winter rain I've found out why they know more. I figured this out when I asked Ray why I wasn't seeing the wildflower displays I expected as I was driving along at 55 mph.<sup>1</sup> This was an easy one. The rain enabled the grass to grow unusually tall and cover the flowers.<sup>2</sup>

Small rodents were virtually absent at Cypress Grove. John Kelly and Grant Fletcher found a single vole on a survey of the grasslands. This in turn affected the raptors. Only one northern harrier and no white-tailed kites nested on the preserve this year. Brant numbers were at their highest-ever numbers in early Spring but were at their lowest level by April. John feels this came about because the eel grass beds were impacted by the high fresh water inflows.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile at the Ranch we lost three heron nests in a May storm. The adults laid a second clutch so it appears we will have heron fledglings through September.<sup>3</sup>

Newts are in trouble, too. (At least the ones at Bouverie.) John Petersen thinks the high water in Stewart Creek may have delayed their breeding. In any case they are at the lowest numbers on record.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, butterflies may be down more than 90%<sup>3</sup>. This seemed to cut across all species.

*(1. Dan actually wrote 60 mph, but we thought it might be better if we preserved his image as a law-abiding, conscientious environmentalist and brought this down to a legal 55.*

*2. Wildflowers on the Hazelnut Trail at San Pedro Valley County Park in Pacifica were still blooming in August.*

*3. These are all examples of what happens when the natural order is disturbed, even when Mother Nature herself does the disturbing. ---Ed.)*



# The S A S Calendar

## October

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5 - BOARD MEETING** at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead to be sure there will be room.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7 - FIELD TRIP TO HAWK HILL** (MARIN HEADLANDS - POINT DIABLO) This is a traditional time and place to watch hawks soar and wheel as they gather their courage to cross the Golden Gate. Accipiters outnumber all other species combined so this trip should give everyone a chance to test their pet theories on how to distinguish between sharp-tailed and Cooper's hawks. However, bald and golden eagles, Swainson's and broad-winged hawks and goshawks have all been observed from here in past years. Bring lunch, liquids and layered clothes. Our leader has acquired her expertise in 6 years of hawk-watching for the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. After lunch we'll investigate other nearby areas for migrant and vagrant species. We will meet at the base of Hawk Hill at the point where Conzelman Road becomes one-way. To get there take 101 across the Golden Gate Bridge and exit almost immediately on Alexander Street. Swing back under the freeway and follow the road up the hill.

**LEADER**

**LESLIE FLINT**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12 - GENERAL MEETING - CALIFORNIA BIRDS OF THE FOUR SEASONS** - Mike Danzenbaker and Lee Hung will give a slide presentation on some of their favorite birding hot spots in California. Social gathering beginning at 7:30 PM with the meeting and program at 8 PM. At the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15 - BURLEIGH-MURRAY STATE PARK FIELD TRIP** - This 1860's era farm was preserved for its historic buildings but is also an excellent birding area. Riparian and grassland areas abut the chaparral-covered hillsides yielding an excellent variety of local resident and wintering species. Last year's inaugural trip yielded more than 60 species. We will meet at 9 AM in the gravelled parking area just inside the gate off Higgins-Purisma Road. To get there go south 1.5 miles from the Hwy 1-Hwy 92 intersection in Half Moon Bay. Turn inland on Higgins-Purisma Road and proceed 1.7 miles to the park entrance on the left.

**LEADER**

**CAROL MILLER**

**726-2025**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21- BEGINNERS' FIELD TRIP TO THE FOSTER CITY SHELL BAR** - Here is an opportunity for both beginners and advanced birders to sharpen their shorebird ID skills. This tiny bit of land hosts thousands of nesting shorebirds at high tide and is the most reliable place to find the elusive red knot. This will follow our beginners trip

format of a relatively short field trip followed by a discussion session of what we saw - or any other topic of interest to the participants. We'll meet at 9 AM on top of the levee paralleling Beach Park Blvd. in Foster City. To get there take Hillsdale Blvd. in Foster City and follow it until it becomes Beach Park. Park on Beach Park shortly after it turns right to follow the bayshore. Look for the birders on the levee.

**LEADER**

**FRANCIS TOLDI**

**344-1919**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25 - SHARP PARK SHORE AND GOLF COURSE.** This area can be extremely productive as it encompasses a harbor with scoters, loons and mergansers, a beach, a fresh-water marsh and isolated groves of trees, all of which have been known to yield surprises. We will meet at 9 AM at the Anchor Monument just south of the fishing pier on Sharp Park Beach. The trip should break up at noon.. Heavy rain cancels the trip.

**LEADER**

**JUDI SPITLER**

**355-9362**

At the time we went to press, the annual planning meeting and the field trip meeting had not been held. Look for the full Field Trip Calendar and for additional information on Sequoia's plans for the year in next month's **NEEDLES**.

## Exotic Plant Symposium

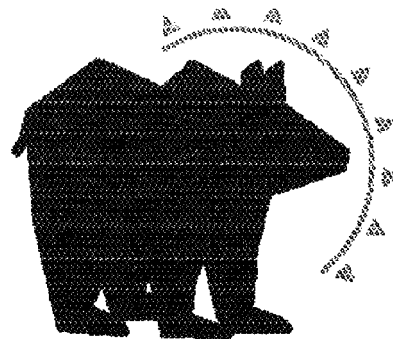
**October 6-8**

The California Exotic Pest Plant Council (CalEPPC) has announced its fourth annual workshop on the threat posed by invasive non-native plant species.

CalEPPC maintains that these exotic species pose the greatest single threat to the long term integrity of many ecosystems, quoting the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) estimate that 4600 acres *per day* are being lost to exotic plants.

Leading experts who are developing solutions will discuss the twin themes of fire and water's effects on invasion and control efforts. Dr. Randy Westbrook, the keynote speaker, will focus on federal regulatory efforts.

To receive an invitation or to register for the symposium, Contact Sally Davis, PO Box 1045, Cambria, CA 93428, Telephone 805-927-7187.



# National Audubon on The Internet

By Rich Kuehn

While still "under construction" and adding new features regularly, National Audubon Society now has a Home Page available to Internet users familiar with 'surfing' the World Wide Web. For those SAS members with a home computer, modem, and Internet connection, just set your "browser" to <<http://www.audubon.org/audubon/>> and you will be welcomed by a beautiful full-colored Cerulean Warbler, as drawn by John James Audubon, next to the Mission Statement of the National Audubon Society. Below, written in hypertext markup language so that clicking on it links the user to the information even though it may be located in an entirely different computer somewhere else on the Net, is the online guide to the NAS. Currently this includes new announcements of the *Southern California Audubon Chapter Information Now Available Here!* and *Sign our Petition to Congress to support the Environmental Bill of Rights!*, as well as an appeal to *Join Today* and accept a free two-month trial membership including a FREE issue of Audubon magazine and full membership privileges, without any obligation. The details of this special offer are found in the Membership section. Clicking on the word membership takes you to a form which can easily be completed using your own keyboard. Finally, is the announcement: Selecting here will take you onward to our complete table of contents.

Having clicked here, you are transported to a contents page which includes the *Local chapters, by Region*. (Yes, Sequoia Audubon Society in San Mateo, CA is listed under the Western Region.) Other topics listed are *The Audubon Newsroom*, which contains timely press releases on critical environmental issues and other news from NAS; *About the National Audubon Society* and *John James Audubon*; *Priority Campaigns*; *Sanctuaries*---which includes a picturesque Online Walk in the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary; *Educational Programs*; *Governmental and Legal Affairs*; *Publications*; *Audubon Productions*; *Natural History Travel Programs*; *Audubon Gift Shop*; and finally *Audubon House: Building Green*, which details the

steps taken by NAS to make the remodeled headquarters building energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

With instantaneous electronic communication rapidly becoming as commonplace as the telephone, I hope you will join me in applauding our National Audubon Society's presence on the World Wide Web. If you would like further information, desire to see a demonstration, or are simply interested in discovering other locations/addresses for birding information available on the Internet, please do not hesitate to contact me. It is my hope SAS will have its own Home Page, along with other Northern California Audubon Chapters, in the not too distant future.

## Audubon Has New President

John Flicker, formerly of the Nature Conservancy, has become the new President of the National Audubon Society.

Flicker, 46, is a birder, an environmentalist attorney and a professional naturalist. His appointment is regarded by many as signaling a return to Audubon's roots and to its emphasis on conservation through birds and birding. Two of his recent statements highlight this change. "[Audubon's] focus on birds has tremendous appeal as a way of people understanding protecting habitat and ecosystems." is seen as a deliberate repudiation of past President Berle's attempts to de-emphasize any association with birds or with John James Audubon while his statement that "We need to articulate what we are for---how we'll give [people] a better life." signals a continuation of Audubon's active environmentalism.

Welcome aboard, John Flicker!

## Sugar Subsidy Endangers Everglades

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) supports an artificially inflated sugar price of 22.5¢ per pound (versus a world market price of 12.5¢).

This subsidy is seen as the primary factor in the destruction of the Everglades.

Not only are taxpayers subsidizing the sugar growers' profits but they are paying for the destruction of the

Everglades and of Florida's water supply. More than half of the nation's sugar is grown on drained former Everglades marshlands. Another 50,000 acres of sawgrass marsh have been ruined by polluted run-off from the cane fields. Two-thirds of Lake Okeechobee's water is diverted to irrigation and fertilizer pollution has made algal bloom a major problem in this large, but shallow, lake. The lake's depth has been artificially enhanced by earthen dikes along its southern shores and runoff has been regulated according to the sugar industry's demands rather than by the requirements of the ecosystem. The results have been the exaggeration of the Everglades' normal wet and dry cycles and a serious reduction in the ability of natural systems to restore Florida's underground aquifer - resulting in huge sinkholes and water shortages in many urban areas.

The case against the sugar subsidy is so powerful that it has brought about the creation of The Coalition to End Welfare for Big Sugar. The coalition brings together a powerful array of diverse groups. Major corporations, including Coca-Cola and Proctor and Gamble, consumer groups and tax-payer groups have joined conservationists to urge repeal of the subsidy. Sugar companies and agricultural organizations are fiercely resisting any reduction or elimination of the subsidy.

Within the federal government, Florida lawmakers are split, while the USDA is pitted against the EPA and the Corps of Engineers

## Bald Eagle Off Endangered List!

Effective August 11, the status of the bald eagle was changed from **endangered** to **threatened** by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Endangered Species Act is now itself being endangered, not only by proposed amendments to the Act itself, but by proposed changes to the 'clean Water Act and the so-called "takings" bills.

As we go to press, a Congressional Conference Committee is expected to approve a new and less stringent Clean Water Act. President Clinton has vowed to veto what he has characterized as a "Polluters' Bill of Rights."



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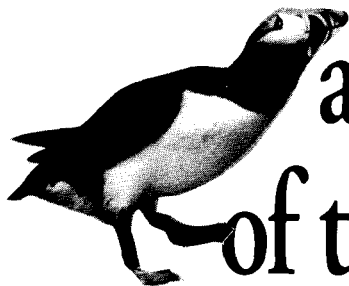
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# Are you reading this newsletter but STILL not a member of the National Audubon Society?



**W**hen you join the National Audubon Society, you become an important part of the most effective environmental organization in the world. An organization for nature and wildlife that reflects your concerns and rewards you with an impressive range of benefits.

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# Summer Birding Moments

Francis Toldi

Some years we have great adventures, filled with exciting new birds. This summer the complex web of work and familial responsibilities didn't allow me to experience big adventures, just small ones. Or maybe they are better described as wonderful birding moments, just as rich and valuable as the grand and glorious experiences. Here are a few of my summer birding moments.

Blasting wind, trees dripping with fog -- that characterizes most days on the high forested ridges of the San Francisco Watershed above Pilarcitos Lake. Once in a while the wind stops, the sun shines and the birds sing. After several outings in the usual weather, I had managed to find a population of Hermit Warblers on Scarper Peak in the Watershed. Actually seeing the birds - let alone confirm their breeding status - was nearly impossible. Well, in June on one of the hottest days of the year, Brian and I found ourselves walking along the ridge on a beautiful, still day. Good birds were singing everywhere: Black-headed Grosbeak, Wilson's Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, Brown Creeper, even a MacGillivray's Warbler. Then we heard the Hermit Warbler right over head. Brian was the first to get on the bird: "Hey, it's got a worm in its bill!" As it flew off to its nest, still with worm, we had our breeding confirmation.

Family Camping near Virginia Lake on the East Side of the Sierras. Birds were all around, but most of my time was spent cooking, cleaning up, packing up, unpacking, locating lost stuffed animals and "interpreting" nature to two five-year olds and a seven year old. One morning my wife Leigh and Aunt Cathy decided to slip out for a dawn outing to Travertine Hot Springs. I was a little worried about Alicia's reaction when she woke up with Mama absent. I lay awake, listening to the dawn chorus. In a little while I heard a little voice say "Papa, if I'm the baby fox will you be the papa fox?" "Sure." A Hermit Thrush and Cassin's Finch were duetting in counterpoint. "Papa, those are different birds, huh." Papa fox smiled

Usually business trips are all business and no birds. Once in a while there is time for a little birding fun. This time it was in New York, in June. I saved a little time before my flight home to drive out to Jones Beach on southern Long Island. There I met Arthur, a kind local birder who came on one of my fieldtrips to Pescadero, and was happy to reciprocate. There on the barrier dunes amidst dozens (hundreds?) of nesting Black Skimmers and Piping Plovers, and accompanied by lively conversation we managed to find my life Roseate Terns. Birding isn't just about birds, its also about fine people.

What is birding without an occasional quest? High on my "most wanted" list is the Great Gray Owl. Many times I have sought it, never with success. I know just where to look, but luck has not been with me on those occasions. Returning from a short birding trip to parts east, my brother and I found ourselves at Crane Flat in Yosemite at around 7:00 p.m. We found a good spot in the right part of the meadow, and waited. And waited. Ankle deep in swampy grass, we waited, with the Camas, Corn Lily and Rein Orchids blooming all around. We stood until night was truly upon us, feeling the beauty and splendor of the darkening world around us, waiting with wet feet for the bird that would not arrive. Finally the only sound left was a Hermit Thrush singing from somewhere deep in the woods.

## Birding Classes

Maryanne Danielson  
Menlo Park

Two classes for birders will be offered by Mariyann Danielson at Little House, 800 Middle Avenue in Menlo Park. There will be nine slide lectures sessions for each class. Fee for the class is \$45. Four optional field trips will be offered in conjunction with each class. An additional fee is required for field trips.

**BIRDING BASICS** is for beginning and less skilled intermediate birders. The fall class series will concentrate on basic avian biology, identification and natural history of land birds. Bird family relationships will be reinforced with indoor hands-on practice time. Class is held **Wednesday evenings, 7:30-9:30 PM**

**starting September 13.** Register at the first class.

**FOLLOWING BIRDS THROUGH THE FALL SEASON** is for intermediate and more advanced birders. This series will feature the fall migration and the return of wintering land and sea birds. Lectures will provide information on migratory patterns and wintering habitats of common and selected rare and endangered species. Identification, life history and community ecology of these birds will be included. **Monday evenings, 7:30-9:30 PM starting September 11.** Register at the first class.

## Joe Morlan San Francisco

Joe Morlan's classes will start on September 6 in Room 222 of the Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street. All classes consist of 7 slide lectures and meet from 7:00-9:30 PM. Free parking is available in the school lot off Bay Street. Text for all classes is the *Field Guide to Birds of North America*, second edition, by the National Geographic Society.

Pre-registration through the San Francisco City College Continuing Education Office at 561-1840 or 267-6545. Fees are \$75 for each seven week course.

**FIELD ORNITHOLOGY I-A & I-B** meets on **Tuesdays**. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology and behavior. **I-A starts 9/12 and ends 10/24. I-B runs from 10/31 to 12/12.**

**FIELD ORNITHOLOGY II-A & II-B** meets on **Wednesdays**. It is a continuing in-depth study of the identification and status of North American land birds including game birds, pigeons, cuckoos, owls and nightjars. **II-A starts 9/6 and ends 10/18. II-B runs from 10/25 to 12/13.**

**FIELD ORNITHOLOGY III-A & III-B** meets on **Thursdays**. It is a continuing study of the identification and status of water birds including seabirds, cormorants, herons and waterfowl. **III-A starts 9/7 and ends 10/19. III-B runs from 10/26 to 12/14.**

Students should bring text and field glasses (strongly recommended but not required) to each class meeting.

# Gifts and Bequests

Sequoia Audubon welcomes gifts in general or on behalf of, or in memory of relatives or friends. Such gifts may be designated for education or for the advancement of the objectives of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check to the Sequoia Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in the *NEEDLES* and personally on behalf of the Society. All gifts are tax-deductible.

**Julie Gills and Mike Cooper in memory of Jeannette Katherine MacDaniel**

**Rosemary Brown, Doris Dart, Noble Owings, Charlotte Waldman & Gertrude Whitman in memory of Winona Sears**

**Lisa & Jeffrey Diamond in memory of the father of Janet Karp**

**Jeam Durick in memory of Vera Schroeder**

**Marjorie Martus**

**Harriet W. Nye**

Sequoia *NEEDLES* is published monthly except in January, July and August. Members are encouraged to submit material to be published in the *NEEDLES*. The deadline for the submission of materials is the first day of the month preceding publication. These may be original articles, original artwork or cartoons, or uncopyrighted material from other sources. Items dealing with conservation issues must be submitted to the Conservation Committee prior to publication.

Information for all officers and chairpersons should be mailed to 30 West 39th Ave., Suite 202, San Mateo, CA 94403-4561. Please send **RENEWAL MEMBERSHIPS** directly to National Audubon in the envelope accompanying your renewal notice.

Please send **LATE RENEWALS** or **NEW MEMBERSHIPS** through Sequoia Audubon Society to insure continuity of newsletter or magazine subscriptions.

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## SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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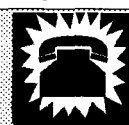
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