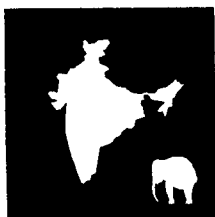


sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 45, No. 4
December, 1995/January, 1996



December's Program

The Splendors of India

December 14, 1995

Beth Huning, Director of the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary, returns to us to present her slide show of India. Beth traveled to India recently as the leader of an Audubon wildlife expedition to the national parks and wildlife preserves of the sub-continent. Her photographs from Corbett National Park, Kanha National Park and Bharatpur Wildlife Sanctuary will illustrate the wildlife that remains, including the elusive Bengal tiger. She will also tell us of the threats from poaching and resource competition despite the well-planned system of forest preserves and wildlife corridors.

The program follows the Potluck Dinner.

Potluck Time!

This month also brings us to our annual December Dinner so dust off your favorite show-off recipes.

Please remember to bring your own utensils and plates and a paper bag in which to take them home. Those people whose last names begin with the letters **A through F** should bring a **DESSERT**; those whose names begin with the letters **G through L**, a **CASSEROLE** or other hot dishes and **M through Z** should provide the **SALADS**.

Bring enough to serve **FIVE** times the number in your party.

The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside with the Potluck beginning at 6:30 PM, and the General Meeting immediately thereafter.

February Bird Seed Sale

We will be holding our Winter Birdseed Sale in February. Unfortunately commitments for space in this month's *Needles* did not allow us to run the order form this month. If you have your September and October *Needles*, you can use those order forms. The information and prices remain unchanged.

An order form will appear in the February *Needles*.



Antarctica.

January's Program

The South Georgia Islands

January 11, 1996

Doug and Gail Cheeseman of Santa Clara Valley Audubon will return to give us one of their very professional presentations on one of their tours. This one to the South Georgia Islands near

The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. A social gathering with refreshments begins at 7:30 with the General Meeting and program beginning at 8:00.

Some Notes On The Crystal Springs Count

The Crystal Springs Christmas Count is actually a few years older than Sequoia Audubon. Jim Rigby organized the first count in 1948 and conducted it with the help of some San

Mateo county members of Santa Clara Valley Audubon. When he moved out of the area in 1949 the count was abandoned and not revived until 1955 by the newly-formed Sequoia Audubon Society. Today's count is conducted on the original count circle established by Jim.

The first count produced only 112 species, but two of those species have never been found again in the count circle. The Blue Goose (now considered a race of the Snow Goose) and the Rufous-crowned Sparrow are still the only Christmas Count records of these species. And it took 42 years to find another rock wren - in the same area as the original sighting!

The revival count in 1955 was officially compiled by Oleta Dickenson and the 1956-1971 counts by B. Neil Dickenson. It really was a team effort in each of these 17 years with Neil doing the field work and Oleta doing the paper-work - and later taking charge of the count dinner as well.

Neil was extremely conservative in his sighting reports. For example, in 1979 he wrote, "My biggest regret is that I didn't report the yellow-billed loon in 1971...Bob Bailey and I studied the bird in Upper Emerald Lake long enough with a 40 power

(Continued on Page Seven)

Remember, there will be no **NEEDLES** in January. This issue contains all of the event information for these two months.

The mission of Sequoia Audubon Society is to participate actively in environmental education, and conservation and in the restoration, preservation, protection and enjoyment of our native natural resources with emphasis on birds and their habitats.



The S. A. S. Calendar



December

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4 - SMITH AND STEINBERGER SLOUGHS - With an early start in this area of southern Redwood Shores we will hope to see Short-eared and Burrowing Owls, a variety of raptors, including possibly Golden Eagles and Peregrine Falcons, as well as our usual winter array of shorebirds and ducks. **Meet at 7:15 AM** in the dirt parking lot east and slightly north of the Whipple Exit off Hwy. 101. The cyclone fence gate is visible from Hwy 101. It will be an easy walking trip of about 2 miles. Be prepared for mud if there has been recent rain.

LEADER AL DeMARTINI 345-6988

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5 - CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 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, DECEMBER 14 - POTLUCK AND GENERAL MEETING - following the Potluck, Beth Huning will present her photographic slide show of India. The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. The Potluck begins at 6:30 PM. The General Meeting follows.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16 - THE CRYSTAL SPRINGS CHRISTMAS COUNT - SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS AND SIGN-UP SHEET.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21 - PALO ALTO FLOOD CONTROL BASIN FIELD TRIP. Geographically isolated from the other areas of the Palo Alto Baylands, this complex area of salt and freshwater ponds, brackish marshes, creeks, sloughs, grasslands and riparian growth offers a wide variety of wildlife in the midst of the highly industrialized and developed western bay-front. As a result it offers much to both the beginning and the skilled birder. Relatively rare birds such as blue-winged teal, redheads, merlins, moorhens, and short-eared owls are regular winter residents and a wide variety of other species can be observed in a relatively small area with a minimal expenditure of time. To get there, take Hwy. 101 to the Embarcadero exit and proceed east to the first traffic light at Frontage Road. Take a right on Frontage Rd. and look for a small parking lot on the left after approximately 1.2 miles. We will meet there at 9:00 A.M. and bird until noon. Regardless of weather expect to encounter some muddy going. Other than that the terrain is flat and the small amount of walking that will be done will be easy going. The trip will be timed so that ardent rail-watchers will have plenty of time to visit the Baylands at the high tide.

LEADER JUDY SPITLER 355-9362

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30 - THE ANO NUEVO CHRISTMAS COUNT - SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS AND SIGN-UP SHEET.

Sequoia Audubon Society

January

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2 - CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead to confirm time and place.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4- BOARD MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead to be sure there will be room.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 10, FOSTER CITY FIELD TRIP - Wintering ducks and shorebirds will be our main interests along the bays and lagoons of Foster City as we look for the field marks that separate Barrow's from Common Goldeneye and greater from lesser scaup. Learn how to identify the red knot (who is really gray) and pick the knot out of the flocks of dowitchers, plovers, willets and dunlins. Meet in the parking lot at the Recreation Center on Shell Blvd. at 9:00 A.M.. Rain cancels the trip. The trip should end at noon.

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11 - JANUARY GENERAL MEETING - Details on the January program were unavailable as of press time. We will try to have the information on the answering machine at the office (345-3724). The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Informal get-together begins at 7:30 PM with the General Meeting and program at 8 PM.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, FOSTER CITY FIELD TRIP

Details are identical with the weekday field trip of January 10.

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 27 & 28 - THE LOS BANOS REFUGES AND PANOCHÉ VALLEY FIELD TRIP. One of our highlight field trips of the year covering two diverse areas and exposing us to a variety of rare and unusual birds. Four refuges and thousands of acres of private wetlands near Los Banos are noted for white-faced ibis, sandhill cranes, a large variety of waterfowl and shore birds, raptors and owls. Twenty miles south of Los Banos, Little Panoche Road winds its way through the Diablo Range into Panoche Valley where wintering flocks of mountain plovers, vesper sparrows, mountain bluebirds, long billed curlews, and perched raptors vie with the resident roadrunners, phainopeplas and chukars for the birders' attention. Saturday we plan on meeting in the parking lot of the Los Banos Wildlife Area on Henry Miller Road north of the town of Los Banos at 9:00 A.M. Sunday we will meet at the parking lot above Little Panoche Detention Reservoir at 8:30 AM. The trips will go on rain or shine. Motel reservations are recommended at this time of year. We have found the Bonanza Motel to be clean, economical and friendly in the past.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 355-4058



The S A S Calendar

February

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1- 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, FEBRUARY 3, THE RAPTORS OF ALTA-

MONT PASS - This area east of Livermore is best known for its windmill farms - except to birders. For birders, Altamont Pass is noted as the winter home of a great number and variety of hawks and eagles. Every winter the resident red-tails, prairie falcons and golden eagles are joined by their cousins fleeing the snows and cold of the north. Peregrines, bald eagles, rough-legged and ferruginous hawks are only some of the visitors to these rolling grasslands and rocky outcrops. This trip normally extends into the afternoon so bring lunch and liquids. We'll begin our caravan of the area at 9:00 AM. To get there take I-580 past Livermore to Vasco Road. Take the Vasco Road exit south. We'll meet near the gas station on the right a short distance down Vasco Road.

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6 - CONSERVATION COMMIT-

TEE MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members welcome. Please call ahead to confirm time and place.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, COYOTE POINT FIELD

TRIP. A special week-day field trip to explore the birds and environmental assets of this very special area. The trip will begin at 9:00 AM in the second parking lot at the park entrance.

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8 - GENERAL MEETING - De-

tails on the February program were unavailable as of press time. Watch the February Needles for details. The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Informal get-together begins at 7:30 PM with the General Meeting and program at 8 PM.

BLM Closes Manila Dunes to Off-Road Vehicles

The Bureau of Land Management has announced that they will be closing the 112 acre Manila Dunes Preserve near Arcata in Humboldt County to all off-road vehicles. The adjacent 300 acre Samoa Dunes however will remain open to day-time ORV usage.

The BLM has taken the step to preserve sensitive plant and animal habitats. The closure plan also includes restoration projects.

While we applaud the closure, the question arises, "Why protect 112 acres while allowing 300 adjacent acres to be destroyed?"

A
C
R



News From Your Ranch

Mary Engebret

New officers of the Audubon Canyon Ranch Board of Directors were elected at the annual meeting. They are: Len Blumin, President; Mary Ellen King, First Vice-president; Paul Ruby, Second Vice-president; Carl Lester, Secretary; and **Rick Baird, Treasurer**. Praise and thanks are extended to outgoing officers and directors Steve Thal, Katy Beacock, Kit Lee, Nikki Spillane, Arthur Feinstein, Elva Edger and Elaine Sent for their dedication and prudence in guiding the ACR Board.

In a novel approach to fund raising the First ACR GALA, "Audubon Canyon Ranch ... Then and Now", was held on October 28. It featured a silent auction, raffle, dinner and dancing. Incredible donations of food, wine, travel, services, specialty items, art objects and getaways for the auction and raffle were contributed by docents, Ranch Guides, Board members, staff, businesses and interested individuals. The evening's program honored four individuals for their own leadership and vision of ACR and as representatives of the others who worked with them and who share their work today. Spotlighted were:

- Clifford Conley, representing ACR's Benefactors,
- Martin Griffin Jr., M.D. representing ACR's Founders:
- Maurice "Skip" Schwartz, representing the ACR Staff,
- Clerin "Zumie" Zumwalt, representing ACR's Volunteers.

In case you haven't already received it, the annual ACR fund raising letter is in the mail.

We received word of the death of Mrs. Randolph A. Kidder in Washington, D.C. "Dotty" Kidder was a close friend of David Bouviere and a major contributor to the programs and the endowment of the Bouvier Preserve. We recently honored her by installing a bronze plaque on "Dotty's Path" to the new pool on Stuart Creek. Her generous support and encouragement will continue inspire all who walk Dotty's Path and experience the joys of nature at Bouvier Preserve.

The Osher Volunteer Center at Picher Canyon is receiving its finishing touches. In the Spring, those of you who host at the Ranch will be able to enjoy its gathering room, library, workroom, audio-visual center, offices and storage space.

A new septic system has been installed at Cypress Grove Preserve. Staff housing needs will be attended to in the future.

The Fall hiking season at the Bolinas Lagoon and Bouvier Preserves are completed. Almost 2500 school children were led on the hikes thanks to the dedication of over 100 docents.

This year we worked with the National Audubon Society to initiate an innovative educational program called XCEL. Twenty young people completed the 1995 summer phase of the XCEL program. They attended a residential camp for two weeks where they were trained in cross-cultural environmental leadership. Then they spent a week training in natural history with

(Continued on Page Four)

News From Your Ranch

(Continued from Page Three)

our docents. Finally, they applied their accumulated skills to the 4th and 5th graders of the Day Camp Program. The docents who developed and supported the summer programs did an outstanding job and are to be commended. The XCELers are now in the second phase of the program, which continues through the school year. This pilot program is funded primarily by a five year grant from the Marin Community Foundation. Dan Murphy, your previous correspondent, has accepted the chair of the ACR Property and Conservation Committee and felt the pinch of time in fulfilling all of his commitments. We extend our thanks to Dan. His timely reports, broad vision and sense of humor will be greatly missed. We will try to do as well.

Point Reyes The Post-Fire Restoration Anne Moser

Point Reyes National Seashore is a magical place. For many of us it is an area full of wonder that enriches our spirit and soothes our jangled nerves. I drove there on a foggy late October morning to search for longspurs.

There was no sign of fire on the drive through Inverness to Drake's Beach. The ranger at the information desk said that you could see some damage on the Limantour side by looking from the top of the hill leading down to Drake's Beach. Although I looked I couldn't see anything because of the fog.

Restoration work is already underway and there are two ways in which you can participate.

A Habitat Restoration Team has been meeting twice a month on weekends. Their work will concentrate on controlling the invasion and spread of non-native plants into the burned area. Having defined their mission, they will now be actually working in the burned areas. If you need more information or if you want to volunteer to work on this project call 415-663-1092.

In addition to restoration of natural habitat, the Park Service will have to replace trail signs, picnic tables and bridges; stabilize watershed areas and trails against erosion, monitor endangered species and complete the numerous small tasks required to restore the Point back to health.

This requires money. You can help by sending checks to the Rehabilitation Fund, Point Reyes National Seashore Association, Point Reyes National Seashore, CA 94956

Some Facts About The Fire (From the NPS publication, "Vision Fire")

The months of September and October are the driest months of the year at Point Reyes with little fog or rain. Most of the burn area had not suffered a wildfire in 50 to 100 years so there was a considerable build up of fuel.

Nearly 12,500 acres were burned - almost 14% of the Park's total acreage.

Limantour Road and Mt. Vision Road are closed until further notice, as are all of the walking and biking trails leading into the burn area.

The plant communities of Point Reyes evolved over the millennia to cope with periodic fires. Natural recovery should be quick and spectacular displays of spring wildflowers are anticipated.

Fire is necessary to maintaining a vital Bishop Pine forest. Cones of the Bishop Pine cannot release their seeds until their resin is melted by fire. The Bishop Pine seedlings require mineral soil and sunlight to germinate. Fire burns off the pine needles and other "duff" that covers the mineral soil and the ashes provide needed nutrients.

Stands of Douglas Fir are also revitalized by the fire but over a longer stretch of time. This species depends on its thick bark to protect mature trees from major damage. The fire wipes out any seedlings and most of the young fir trees. The post-fire conditions allow madrone and oak to sprout. In twenty years, the protection provided by these species will produce ideal conditions for the germination and growth of a new generation of Douglas Firs.

Wildfires tend to be patchy in their effect. Some areas are totally destroyed,

others barely touched. This leads to habitat diversity and an expansion in the variety of wildlife.

The loss of animal and insect life in a wildfire is remarkably small. Those species that cannot flee the area survive by burrowing in the ground or finding other safe refuges. Firefighters regularly report wild animals foraging in the still smoldering ashes.

Introductions and Invasions

Brown tree snakes invaded Guam a few years ago and the effect on native birds was catastrophic. The snake has recently been found in Hawaii and a massive program is underway to eradicate it before it becomes established. The snakes are assumed to have arrived as stowaways aboard cargo planes from Guam or from their native New Guinea.

The small zebra mussel, a Eurasian species which inhabits fresh and brackish water, is spreading rapidly through the Great Lakes. Some current theories make it appear to be the ideal diet food. The tough shell contains very little meat and it appears that scaup feeding on them are underweight. Speculation is that the meat contains fewer calories than the birds burn while grinding up the shell in their gizzards.

A flock of Vaux's swifts invaded a chimney in Port Angeles, Washington. Firefighters "rescued" them and released them in the area, whereupon they promptly dived right back into the chimney! After a second rescue, the birds were foiled by a piece of plywood placed over the chimney. Of course, the local news media referred to them as chimney swifts.

Sea otters have been found to be suffering from lead pollution from industrial sources. A comparison of teeth from ancient otter remains found at Elkhorn Slough shows that modern sea otters have higher concentrations of the element in their bodies. The amount of lead does not appear to be high enough to be toxic but no thresholds have been established.

COME COUNT WITH US!

CALLING ALL BIRDERS FOR THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

December brings a chance to participate in one of our chapter's most important activities. Sequoia Audubon holds two Christmas Bird Counts each year. The Crystal Springs Count will be held on Saturday, December 16 followed by the Año Nuevo Count on December 30. All levels of birders are **WELCOME** and **NEEDED**. Join a team, enjoy the camaraderie, have fun and contribute to the effort!!!

What makes this event so successful? It's lots of fun. For many it is the first chance to participate in a vital scientific endeavor. Each year the data from more than 1500 counts is published in Audubon Field Notes. The resulting database is tapped over and over again by scientists and researchers worldwide to uncover important avian trends. There is simply no better source for this information.

SO, please join us for one or both counts. Send your check and registration form to the Sequoia Audubon office along with your name, telephone number and address. For more information call the office (415-345-3724) during office hours, Tuesday through Thursday, 9 AM to 12:30 PM.

It really helps the compilers to know as soon as possible who will participate. Teams need to be organized and information sent to the leaders. Please fill out the form **TODAY** and send it on its way.

The Christmas Counts!

Sequoia Audubon Society

Registration Form

1995 Christmas Counts

I would like to participate in:

- ☐ Crystal Springs Bird Count (\$5)
December 16, 1995
- ☐ Año Nuevo Bird Count (\$5)
December 30, 1995
- ☐ I am willing to serve as an area leader

For Año Nuevo, I would like to count this area:

1st Choice: _____

2d Choice _____

3d Choice _____

I will count any area assigned:

☐ Yes ☐ No

For Crystal Springs, I would like to count this area:

1st Choice: _____

2d Choice _____

3d Choice _____

I will monitor and report my feeder on:

Dec. 16 _____ Dec. 30 _____

☐ I will be at the compilation on Dec. 16
(No compilation on Dec. 30)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Zip Code: _____

Telephone _____

E-mail: _____

**Please cut out or copy and mail
with your check to:**

Christmas Counts
Sequoia Audubon Society
30 West 39th Avenue, Suite 202
San Mateo, CA 94403

Bair Island Nesting - 1994

Peter J. Metropulos

(Condensed from the Spring 1995 edition of The Stilt, newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory [SFBBO])

Bair Island, so near to a highly populated urban area, is in many ways distant from the civilized world. It has (so far) been spared the destructive effects of development and remains an important South Bay site for birds and other forms of wildlife. Unfortunately it is primarily under private ownership with a small portion included in the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (SFBNWR).

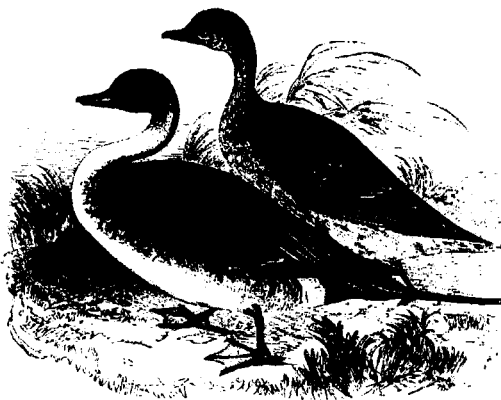
From March through July I accompanied SFBBO Biologist Valerie Layne and her volunteers on monthly boat trips to the island. Our primary purpose was to monitor existing heron and cormorant nest sites, inspect for shorebird or tern nesting colonies and search for evidence of predation by the red fox. I was also conducting my surveys for the San Mateo County Breeding Bird Atlas.

With just a few scrawny, drought-ravaged shrubs and trees, no fresh water and very little cover, it is understandable that the avifauna of Bair Island is not diverse; however many of the species that occur there are "special", limited in distribution and abundance in the Bay Area, a number of them being severely threatened with continuing population declines due to habitat destruction. Bair Island includes a flat upland area of grasses and weeds dotted with clumps of coyote bush, surrounded by a cordgrass/pickleweed marsh, and at low tide by mudflats. There are also meandering sloughs, seasonal ponds and open areas nearly devoid of vegetation.

"Target" species for SFBBO's monitoring program included Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron and Double-crested Cormorant. There were 22 Great Blue Heron and 175 Double-crested cormorant nests on the island's PG&E towers. Night herons built 29 nests of thin twigs in coyote bush at heights of 3-6 feet, but some within inches of the ground. Such proximity to the ground resulted in predation of many eggs and apparently some nestlings by

large rodents (species unknown). During one of our surveys, after finding a large number of "chewed-up" eggs it came as "sweet revenge" to watch a Great Egret swoop in and carry off a large live rat. Predation, it seems, can work both ways.

A peak population year for rodents triggered an impressive concentration of marshland raptors. Five pairs of White-tailed Kites were found, the adults raising at least seven broods. We found their nest in the tops of the coyote bush, 6-7 feet from the ground. Two pairs of Northern Harriers were observed engaging in courtship displays and juveniles seen in May and July indicated local nesting success. Peregrines seemed to be defending a terri-



tory in March, but were absent thereafter.

Perhaps the most significant nesting observations we recorded on Bair Island involved the Short-eared Owl. This species is a terrestrial nester and requires large open fields with adjacent marshlands, an endangered habitat in our region. Valerie and I literally stumbled upon two adults on a nest. The nest, a shallow depression in the grass lined with dried weeds and feathers contained three large fully-feathered owlets. In July I was ecstatic to see 10 Short-eared Owls flying at one time, including three fledglings. I suspect three pairs nested here.

This season a pair of Burrowing Owls remained at a nest hole at inner Bair Island just east of Highway 101. This is the last nesting pair known to exist in San Mateo County.

The few waterfowl which attempted to reproduce on Bair Island had a difficult time of it due to the relentless predation by rats and red foxes. We found evidence of fox predation on nearly every visit. The red fox unlike our native gray fox is a

good swimmer. All it takes is one marauding red fox to destroy or disrupt thousands of nesting birds! During the season we found one Canada Goose nest in a pickleweed marsh. We also found one Northern Pintail, one Gadwall and three Mallard nests all in dry grassy upland areas.

It is disappointing to report a total lack of nesting by terns and shorebirds this year. Caspian Terns nested intermittently through 1993 when all of the nests were destroyed by red foxes. The endangered Least Tern nested here from the late 60's through 1982. Habitat changes may have forced them to move elsewhere.

The Clapper Rail was spotted twice on our surveys. Although we have yet to observe evidence of breeding here, I strongly suspect a few pairs of this endangered species nest in the extensive cordgrass/pickleweed marshes occurring around the island.

Ground-nesting songbirds had a difficult time attempting to reproduce in this predator-rich environment. In early spring it was heartening to hear the sweet song of the Western Meadowlark in the grassy fields. By mid-summer the only evidence of this yellow-breasted songster was a chewed-up wing I found next to a mound of fox scat.

Although our main focus was on birds we also kept track of the number and ages of the resident colony of Harbor Seals. A small group utilizes the higher portions of mudflats along secluded sloughs for "hauling-out" and "pupping".

One of our biggest surprises occurred on May 26 when the rescue of a misguided Gray Whale held up the launching of our research vessel. The confused young whale became temporarily stuck among the boat docks at the Redwood City Marina, creating quite a stir both literally and figuratively.

Bair Island is today a unique, and in many ways, a mysterious place. I wonder who, decades ago, left the vintage truck to rest forever in this land with no roads. Who excavated the small shellmound grave we found on the bluff above the beach with a rusted metal sign marked "Anna"? And who (or what) was Anna? Today only the Song Sparrow and the harrier know for sure.

Crystal Springs Count

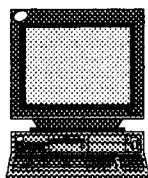
(Continued from Page One)

spotting scope in excellent light." There have never been any official sightings of this bird on the count.

The first counts failed to take full advantage of Pillar Point and Princeton harbor. Pelagic and off-shore species were rare until Barry Sauppe took over as compiler in 1974. From then on the numbers and varieties of shearwaters, tubenoses, alcids and red phalaropes steadily increased. For example, no fulmar was reported until 1976 but was reported every year thereafter except for 1986 (heavy off-shore winds) and 1987, when Barry had to seriously cut down on his time at the spotting scope.

Through the years, the Crystal Springs Count has been the least well-known of the top 10 counts in the nation in terms of numbers of species, once finishing as high as second. Of all the "top" counts, it has also been consistently the one with the lowest number of participants, and with the smallest number of "same" birders, making it the most productive count on a species per birder basis. Our history shows that when we have the most birders, we have our highest counts.

That means we need your help. If you haven't signed up for one of the counts, do it today. Make us number one in the nation!



Great Bird Spell Checks

Francis Toldi

Everyone knows that computers are a wonderful tool for writers, thinkers and collectors of information. For me, one of their most useful features is the "spell check", or an automated system for double checking the correct spelling of all words used in whatever you just wrote on the computer. The computer automatically checks each word and if it doesn't recognize what you wrote as a word, gives you

an array of options of what you probably really meant.

The problem is, whoever programs the computer doesn't know much about birds. Here are some interesting suggested corrections for bird names used in a recent note I wrote on my computer.

Name I Used	Computer Suggested
Willet	Wallet, Wiglet
Brandt's Cormorant	Brando Cormorant
	Brandied Cormorant
Greater Scaup	Greater Scamp
Surfbird	Surfboard
Jaeger	Jaguar, Jogger, Jigger
Heerman's Gull	Hormone Gull
Glaucous Gull	Glucose Gull
Ancient Murrelet	Ancient Muralist, Ancient Moralist
Auklet	Anklet
Dark-eyed Junco	Dark-eyed Junkie

The computer had absolutely no idea what to do with Phainopepla.

(Whatever happened to the Western, Clark's, Pied-billed, Eared & Horned Greasies? ...Ed.)



The Feather Duster

Cliff Richer

I've just received a letter and some promotional materials from a new organization called BOSSS. BOSSS stands for Business Owners Surrounding the Salton Sea but at this moment it appears they have a long way to go before they actually surround the sea. All of the promotional material is for businesses in the little town of Salton City, about half-way down the western shore of the lake. However, Salton City is the home of BIG DREAMS ...and bigger disappointments. There are miles of paved streets with signs and hydrants - and no houses. There are the remains of what appears to have been a health spa, long abandoned, and bearing the evidence of years of vandalism. There are the remains of a motel, hundreds of yards out in the lake. (The builders failed

to realize that a lake with no outlet will rise.)

Since the last time I've visited Salton City, someone has evidently built a golf course (in an area that looks like one gigantic sand trap). Now they have also constructed a bird-watching trail with shaded areas, benches, restrooms and blinds. This parallels the shoreline and evidently gives access to a previously inaccessible (or nearly inaccessible) wetland north of the marina area.

Salton City was always a quick stop for me on my way between the north and south ends. I could always count on finding Yellow-footed Gulls here and on several occasions found Gull-billed Terns and once, a Laughing Gull.

Once I used to visit the area annually but then the Department of Fish and Game decided to "improve" their wildlife areas in the south end - and damn near ruined them when they ran out of money. Then the local power company closed off the accesses to the Whitewater Delta at the north end and I found it too much trouble to go back just to look for Wood Storks and Fulvous Whistling Ducks in 130° temperatures. (Honestly, once.)

But now, just maybe, this new trail might tempt me. After all I still haven't found the Bronzed Cowbird in El Centro. And I still need it for my US and California lists. Hmmm. Just maybe next summer.

Hummingbird Miscellany

Ruby-throated hummingbirds make a 500 mile non-stop flight across the Gulf of Mexico. They fly alone, at about 25 miles per hour, for 26 hours. Early observers, including Audubon, considered this impossible. They theorized that the hummingbirds hitched a ride on the backs of hawks. Ironically, hawks which depend on thermals to give them long range capability, are unable to make this long overwater flight.

A hummingbird's wings beat 55 times per second while feeding, but 200 times per second when courting. (I can understand that...Ed.)

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Laverne B. Cox, Anne Levinson and Ray Novarina for Audubon Adventures

Shirley A. Higuera in recognition of the good work done by Sequoia Audubon

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