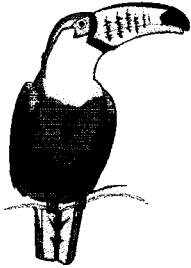


sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 45, No. 9
June, 1996



The General Meeting: Costa Rica

Beginning in the summer of 1995, a group of intrepid travelers from Sequoia and Santa Clara Audubon Chapters started getting together to learn about the birds they would see on a journey to Costa Rica. They met monthly, starting in October, to go through the Costa Rica guide, bird by bird, under the tutelage of Sequoia's own Dan Keller. They were told the likelihood of seeing the birds, where they would see them and the ID marks they needed to know.

The trip left SFO on Super Bowl Sunday this year. After an all-night flight to San Jose, Costa Rica, we were immediately whisked away into the hill country to a gorgeous villa nestled in the trees with spectacular views of 2 volcanoes in the distance and lush green farmland and forests below. This is Rancho Naturalista. Lunch was ready when we arrived and ... to get a better understanding of how the rest of the trip unfolded, plan to attend the June 13 meeting and hear Dan Keller talk about the birds, habitat and lodges enjoyed. His talk will be accompanied by Rich Kuehn's video footage.

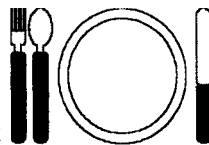
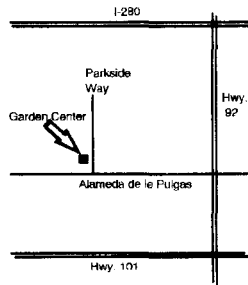
Dan Keller will be returning to Costa Rica in August. San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) may still have space on this trip. Call Dan or the Observatory for more information.

Potluck Time!

This month also brings us to our annual June Potluck 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 name begins with the letters **A-F** should bring a **DESSERT**; those whose names begin with the letters **G-L**, a **SALAD**, and **M through Z** should provide the **CASSE-ROLES** or other hot dishes. Be sure your offering will feed at least 5 people.

The Potluck Dinner begins at 6:30 PM.



Eileen Jennis-Sauppe
Conservation Committee Chairwoman

On April 20, the Conservation Committee hosted a table at the Arbor Day/Earth Day celebration in Pacifica. The Vallemar Conservators organized the event in cooperation with the city of Pacifica. This was a happy community get-together, and twenty-seven native trees were planted to start off the day. There were information booths, live music, great food, an historical exhibit of the Vallemar district and even a parade! We enjoyed meeting some of the Pacifica members of SAS who stopped by during the festivities including Jim Grant, Mary Harris, Sue and Dean Parnell, several prospective Sequoians and many fellow birders on the coast.

On April 28, we attended a clean-up of the wetlands area at the end of Whipple Ave. in Redwood City, an area that is popular for joggers, cyclists and a wonderful array of birds and wildlife. Most importantly it is adjacent to Bair Island, the most important habitat for the endangered Clapper Rail.

Election Of Officers

Don't forget that June is the month for our annual elections. The Nominating Committee offers these candidates:

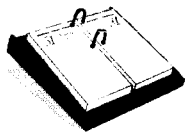
- ◆ President - **Francis Toldi**
- ◆ Vice-president - **Debby Frantz**
- ◆ Treasurer - **Tom Vanden Bosch**
- ◆ Secretary - **Shirley Higuera**
- ◆ Director (term expiring June 1999)
 - ◆ **Sue Cossins**
 - ◆ **Alvaro Jaramillo**
- ◆ Director (term expiring June 1997)
 - ◆ **Rich Kuehn**

Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse and other species of wildlife whose survival is teetering in the balance in our county. The event was organized by Mike Spence (creator of the popular "Local Birds" poster, folder and/or place mat), who is a member of the Redwood City Pride and Beautification Committee and Sequoia Audubon. Dozens of young people and adults filled many bags of trash, and there were trucks and cranes on hand to lift the heavy stuff (water-logged tires, carburetors, cement blocks and broken posts).

Representatives Anna Eshoo and Tom Lantos testified before a House Interior sub-committee urging approval of \$10 million to purchase Bair Island and add it to the Don Edwards San

(Continued on Page Two)

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

TUESDAY, JUNE 4 - CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members

welcome. Please call ahead to confirm time and place.

THURSDAY, JUNE 6 - 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, JUNE 13 - ANNUAL ELECTION, GENERAL MEETING & POTLUCK DINNER - The meeting will be at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. The Potluck begins at **6:30 PM**. The Election of Officers and the General Meeting follow. The program on **Costa Rica** will feature Rich Kuehn and Dan Keller and their adventures at Ranch Naturalista and its associated preserves.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, JUNE 15 & 16 - YUBA PASS & SIERRA VALLEY - HIGH SIERRA & HIGH DESERT MARSHLANDS - *Note that this is a change of date from the earlier schedules.* This trip affords a chance to see birds rarely seen on any of our other field trips. The trip features easy trail walking through lovely mountain and Sierra Valley habitats. On Saturday we will meet at 9 AM in the parking lot of the Sierra Nevada Field Campus east 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. Bring liquids for two days. 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 \$25.50 a day. Just bring your own bedding. If you're not into camping the meals (breakfast, dinner and a bos lunch) are available for \$14.50 a day. Motels are available in Sierra City and reservations are advisable since there may be several other birding groups in the area at the same time. Some of the motels are:

- HARRINGTON'S SIERRA PINES (916) 862-1151
- SIERRA CHALET (916) 862-1110
- BUTTES MOTEL (916) 862-1170
- SIERRA BUTTES INN (916) 862-1122

In order to properly scout the area and determine the exact itinerary, the leader must know approximately how many participants to expect so please call to let him know you are coming and to get further information and directions.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754

There are no September items for the Calendar at this time. We'll try to get your September Needles to you in plenty of time for you to make your plans for the month. Have a good summer!



(Continued from Page One)

San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Whether the allocation will ever be approved

hard to say. **Reps. Eshoo and Lantos need to hear from SAS members supporting** their efforts to purchase Bair Island for the Refuge.

Citizens To Complete the Refuge and Friends of Redwood City were also at the April 28 clean-up. Also represented were the Aqua Terra Project, a group who organized a giant effort to remove rotting and abandoned boats from the waters near Bair Island. Here are some facts provided by Friends of Redwood City about this important wetland habitat in our county:

The Bair (Island) Facts

1. Bair Island constitutes the single most significant and valuable potential addition to the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and is classified as Priority 1 for acquisition in the US Department of the Interior Environmental Assessment for proposed additions to San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Bair Island includes the largest remaining unprotected wetland area in the San Francisco Bay Estuarine System. Because over 82% of the System's wetlands have already been lost to urbanization it is crucial that Bair Island be protected.

2. Bair Island includes existing and potential prime habitat for the California Clapper Rail. The addition of Bair Island to the National Wildlife Refuge could very well be the last and only chance for the survival of this Endangered Species. Bair Island also provides important habitat for the endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, the California Least Tern, the Peregrine Falcon, the Brown Pelican, and for numerous species of concern. This rich area provides nesting and/or forage for 82 species of waterbirds and 44 species of landbirds, and home for 13 species of mammals, 28 species of marine estuarine invertebrates, 63 species of fish, 28 species of flowering plants, and 13 species of grasses according to the Bair Island Environmental Inventory done by San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory in 1988.

3. Bair Island is actually comprised of three islands, Outer, Middle and Inner, with a total area of approximately 3,500 acres. Approximately 1100 acres are threatened and need to be acquired for addition to the Refuge. Outer Bair and Middle Bair are sheltered from urban intrusion by wide and deep tidal channels and are thus extremely valuable as sensitive wildlife habitat. Inner Bair is easily accessible to the public and is presently very popular with joggers and hikers. This island is well suited for a nature interpretive center and trails and further serves to buffer the sensitive outer islands.

4. Historically Bair Island was entirely composed of tidal marsh. In the 1940s most of the area was diked and removed from tidal action for the commercial purpose of solar salt production. Salt production was discontinued in 1965 and the area was planned for urban development. Since that time some of the dikes on Outer and Middle Bair have been naturally breached, allowing the resumption of tidal action and the consequent restoration of biological activity in the affected areas;

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however, most of the diked areas have been maintained in an artificially dry and ecologically unproductive state. The natural recovery of the breached-dike areas demonstrates that the probability of successful restoration of the degraded areas of Bair Island to biological productivity is very high and the probable cost of doing so is very low. The principal actions required are the breaching of existing dikes and the installation of tidal gates in some areas to mute tidal range until hydration, siltation, and biological regeneration can repair the effects of decades of environmental abuse.

5. There is strong regional support for the inclusion of Bair island in the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. A proposal for the urban development of Bair Island was defeated by a citizens' referendum in 1982. Since that time public awareness of the value of wetlands to the quality of life in the San Francisco Bay region has increased manifold. In a letter dated April 28, 1994, ten members of the Bay Area Congressional delegation urged the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to acquire Bair Island for addition to the refuge, and on December 6, 1994, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution (#58983) supporting such action. Today Bair Island is owned by the Japanese company, Kumagai Gumi of Tokyo, whose local representative is KG Land California/Redwood Shores Inc., San Mateo, CA.

6. Besides furthering the broad goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System, acquisition of Bair island would serve several other highly useful societal functions, i.e., the improvement of water and air quality, provision of flood control and storm surge abatement, the reduction of siltation in navigable channels, and the prevention of new demands on the Bay Area's already overburdened transportation and water supply systems.

7. The referendum which saved Bair Island from urban development in 1982 served as a catalyst for the citizens' effort which culminated in the passage of legislation in 1988 authorizing the expansion of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (PL 100-556). It is now appropriate that Bair island be acquired for inclusion in that Refuge.

8. Bair Island is the only portion of the west side of San Francisco Bay that has potential to be restored in our lifetimes. The lands north of Bair Island have been developed for urban uses. The lands south of Bair island are active salt evaporator ponds. Only Bair Island is both easily protected from predators and easily restorable to high quality salt marsh habitat at minimum cost.

And now a word about our sponsors and other friends...

The conservation committee has been struggling for several months to achieve its communications goal of acquiring a FAX machine and PC on-line service for SAS. Recently, conservation committee member **Leslie Flint** broke the standstill when she generously whipped out her checkbook and sent me off in pursuit of a Fax/copier machine! (A portion of the bill will be reimbursed by our California State office with moneys received from an oil spill mitigation settlement.) **Francis Toldi**, our Secretary and Presidential nominee realized that his

company was upgrading a computer system in the office and persuaded them that SAS could still travel many miles on the information superhighway with their older system (let's hear it for upgrades!).

Rich Kuehn and **Dean Schuler** (V.P. and program director, respectively) are sponsoring a year's subscription to an on-line service. And Rich donated some software and waved his magic wand over the system and finally got it to produce those funny sounds that mean you are on-line. Unfortunately, we quickly jumped off-line due to a glitch in the system software, which will have to be re-installed before our e-mail address can function. Rich and **Robin Smith** (education chair) contributed money for an internal modem, which, believe-it-or-not, I installed *myself!* (applause). I realize that I am now a newbie. I have also installed a new phone line and will take care of the monthly charges. The copy cartridges, FAX paper and hookup charge for the on-line provider was made possible by a generous donation from conservation committee members **Bob and May Blossom Wilkinson**. And the ongoing charges for future action alerts have been sponsored by several SAS members who responded to our action alert subscription plea, including **D. William, S. Kitzer** and **G.B. Wood**.

This was not an easy transition, and I'd like to extend a hearty "Thank You!" to all who helped us become more efficient and up-to-date. We can now exchange information with our new California State office, numerous environmental organizations that we work with, and legislators I with greater speed and lower cost.

If you would like conservation committee updates and action alerts via e-mail or FAX, please note the address and number below. As of this writing, we are not back on-line yet, but the FAX machine is going strong.

FAX# (415) 712-8571

e-mail sequoia@a.sirius.com

And More Electronic Stuff

The *Needles* has also done some upgrading. We too have fax capability - but it's a little more complicated to use - and we now have a scanner so that we can input photos and drawings.

To fax anything to the *Needles*, you have to call first so that your editor can switch his phone and computer over to fax capability. Then you hang up, wait a few minutes, call again and send your fax.

As for scanning, we're still learning how to use the full capability of our setup. So far most of the color photos we've scanned have come out too dark to reproduce well, but we're still experimenting. On the other hand, Eileen's article and the handout from the Friends of Redwood City scanned with only minor corrections required. (Several of the corrections were mis-spellings on the handout, not scanning problems.) Black and white line drawings also reproduce well as is evidenced by the one below.

The Osprey

has a taxonomic family all to itself. Although closely related to both hawks and eagles, it is neither. It is one of only a few birds that are found worldwide on every continent except Antarctica.



Audubon and the ESA

John Mc Caull

California Legislative Director

On December 14, 1995, the California Legislative Affairs Program took a position of "oppose unless amended" on a package of amendments to the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Although I represented both the National Audubon Society and the 54 affiliated California chapters in two years of negotiations with other stakeholders, the final package of changes to CESA was simply unacceptable to Audubon's conservation leadership in California.

The Endangered Species Act represents the core public policy agenda of Audubon. Our organization's focus on birds, wildlife and habitat require that we clearly define our position on the future of both state and federal endangered species laws, especially in a time of constant, hostile attack.

As a result of our exhaustive review of the CESA proposal, we have taken the first steps towards defining Audubon's vision of a revised and strengthened endangered species program in California. This memo outlines the basic scope of the negotiations, the preconditions that Audubon is insisting upon for our support of a CESA reform package and some good news on our high priority legislation (SB 1751 [Marks]).

A. Why Were We In Negotiations?

The negotiations over the California ESA began in earnest in the Summer of 1994 after a series of competing bills to reform the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) were introduced in the state legislature. The National Audubon Society, the Planning & Conservation League, the Sierra Club and the California Native Plant Society) succeeded in defeating or holding any legislation which we felt would weaken the California ESA. This victory had a price however. At the urging of leaders in the State Senate, our organizations spent many hours discussing consensus based changes to CESA with

representatives from a broad industry coalition including timber, oil, farming, development and local government interests.

Our goal was to get the business community to the table, and move beyond the "repeal the ESA" rhetoric and see if we could actually solve some of CESA's implementation problems to the satisfaction of all sides. A package of reforms was initially agreed to, but the agreement fell apart in the last days of the 1994 legislative session due to resistance within the timber industry and other business groups.

After a similar legislative stalemate in 1995, and the defeat of Governor Wilson's SB 131 in May 1995, roughly the same group reconvened last year to try to develop a package of reforms to CESA. Over Labor Day weekend, most of the negotiating parties reached agreement on a substantial package of proposed amendments. Time ran out, and the package was not acted on before the 1995 session adjourned.

B. What Caused Audubon To Change Our Position?

Because the CESA agreement had not received widespread review within the environmental community, and because of serious questions over strategy and substance that were raised by political leaders and our colleagues in other groups, we held a series of briefings around the state on the language and philosophy of the CESA proposal.

These inter-organizational meetings were also paralleled by a series of meetings within Audubon to address the growing list of concerns with the language of the proposal.

The result of three months of intensive discussions within the environmental community revealed a widespread dislike of both the direction of the CESA proposal and many of the actual provisions. Although most of the criticisms were levied against specific parts of the proposal, many also felt that we are now regaining momentum on the federal level on ESA reauthorization and other issues, and why should we compromise now on CESA at the state level?

Others expressed concerns that we had failed to develop our bottom lines in California on the ESA, and this had

hindered the effectiveness of the proposal once it "hit the streets". Others were very concerned that a split on CESA between the two major grassroots groups working on ESA issues - the Sierra Club and Audubon - would be quite destructive, and ultimately counterproductive.

In mid-December, I informed my negotiating partners that Audubon could no longer support the package as agreed to back in September. Audubon's California Legislative Affairs Steering Committee, several chapter presidents, Dan Taylor our State Director and I came to a consensus that there were too many problems with the CESA proposal to continue to support it.

Every indication was that the Sierra Club would have opposed the package if introduced in 1996, leaving the Planning & Conservation League and the California Native Plant Society to carry it alone. A decision was made in late December by all the environmental groups associated with the Negotiations to withdraw support for the package and not seek its introduction as a bill in 1996.

C. Where Does This Leave Us?

Upon request, I will provide any interested person with a basic synopsis of the compromise proposal, and a summary of the changes Audubon has suggested to fix the defects of the negotiated package.

Now that the 1996 legislative session is upon us, we are taking a new approach. Rather than starting from the negotiated compromise and trying to "fix it" we have developed a legislative proposal that clearly defines the conservation improvements needed in CESA.

There were several major unresolved issues which were left off (or dropped off) the negotiating table in 1994 and 1995. The Wilson Administration and the California Attorney General have been aggressively undermining the **Sweethome** decision, issuing blatantly illegal "general" take permits, and violating the law in the area of incidental take permitting. Unless and until these issues are adequately addressed in the legislature or in court, we will have a very incomplete reform of CESA.

(Continued on Page Five)



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REQUEST FOR CHAPTER ACTION

Along with the Sierra Club, Audubon will be leading an effort over the next several months to garner support for 1751 (Marks) which amends CESA to accurately reflect the priorities of our chapters and grassroots activists in the field.

On Tuesday, April 23, the Senate Natural Resources Committee voted to support SB 1751 on a 6-5 vote. We are on our way!

SB 1751 will:

- Uphold the Supreme Court's **Sweethome** decision at the state level to ensure that habitat is protected under CESA's prohibition against the "take" of candidate, threatened or endangered species.
- Mandate that any permit for the "take" of a protected species must include steps that will ensure a "net conservation benefit" for the species.
- Strengthen California's Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Act to ensure that sweeping "habitat coverage" plans in Southern California for the coastal sage scrub ecosystem do not leave out science or actual conservation benefits for the species that inhabit the land.
- For the first time, require recovery plans for newly listed and previously listed species under CESA.
- Provide a clear set of legal standards for citizen enforcement of CESA's basic conservation standards.

SB 1751 will also complement an effort at the federal level to introduce a bill in Congress which will actually strengthen the ESA.



Live, as it were, in trust. All that is in you, all that you are, is only loaned to you. Make use of it according to the will of Him who lends it, but never regard it for a moment as your own.

Francois Fenelon

California Office First to Form Under Strategic Plan

A cornerstone of National Audubon's new field office development program will be the decentralization of Audubon through the building of strong and effective state programs. This will significantly enhance the partnership of Audubon staff and volunteers working together to chart the course of wildlife conservation in the future. National Audubon chapter leaders in California are getting an up-close glimpse of the future as they observe and participate in the first Audubon field office formed under the new Strategic Plan.



The California Field Office is now about three months old, and is making some impressive strides toward implementing the Strategic Plan. The California Office is headed by Executive Director Dan Taylor. He is a 17 year veteran of the Audubon staff, and has worked closely with Audubon chapters for many years on issues ranging from the campaign to protect Mono Lake to the Ancient Forest Campaign.

The California Office is developing an action plan to guide the work of the field program that will:

- sharpen our focus on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats;
- invest in our distinctive system of grassroots chapters; and
- use education and advocacy as the primary tools to achieve our mission.

Audubon's Strategic Plan calls for implementing specific changes that will place the Society in a better position to protect habitats for birds and wildlife in

states across the country. In California, Audubon is building on the strengths it possesses, and making significant changes in how work is done in order to better reflect its Strategic Plan.

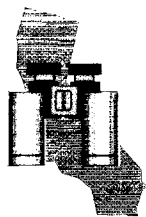
The primary focus of the California Field Office will be to work with local chapters and state volunteers to strengthen Audubon's capacity at the local level. The California Office will have the authority, the capacity, and the flexibility to do what works best in that state. Existing staff roles are being refocused to fit the needs called for in the Strategic Plan. These needs include: 1) grassroots training and outreach, 2) fundraising, 3) conservation policy, 4) communications, 5) education, and 6) sanctuary management. An important product of the reorganization is a much greater sense of integration among all of National Audubon's programs in the state.

A key element of the new field office program is the emphasis on building pro-active, comprehensive campaigns that channel the conservation energies of the organization statewide. The objectives emerging for California include: 1) restoring critical riparian habitats for neotropical migratory birds and important interior wetlands for other migratory birds; 2) conserving fragile and declining coastal scrub habitats from rapid urbanization; 3) preserving wetlands in the San Francisco Bay Area; and 4) initiating an education curriculum that promotes a culture of conservation.

There is much work to be done in fully implementing this bold new vision for Audubon in California, but so far, chapter leaders are seizing the opportunity to participate as full partners in creating this new Audubon that focuses on birds, wildlife and habitat, and the outstanding strength and capabilities of our chapters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Write: Dan Taylor, California Field Office, NAS, 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825;
Telephone: 916-481- 5332;
Internet: dtaylor@audubon.org.



The Wandering Tattler

Anne Moser

They walk on water!
They dance! They really do!

I was fortunate enough to see Western Grebes doing their mating ritual while visiting Clear Lake on April 13th this year. The Redbud Audubon Society ran pontoon boat trips during their "Heron Days" celebration. The trip started at 9 AM and lasted until about 11:30, taking us along Cache Creek and into Anderson Marsh. It was a sunny calm day! We saw Great Blue Herons on their nests, a pair of Red-shouldered hawks on a nest and several Green Herons flying by with their orange-red feet noticeable. We did get good looks at one Green Heron standing by the side of the creek. Several ospreys and Double-crested Cormorants were perched on snags. Coots were everywhere. The highlight of the trip, however, was seeing a pair of grebes moving their necks back and forth, then rising up on their feet and dancing in unison across the water. It was like a ballet. Their grace was breathtaking. In all, we saw five different pairs dancing at various times.

The Redbud Audubon Society will be celebrating "Heron Days" again next year. I have a contact number if anyone is interested in attending

Odds & Ends from Your Resident Curmudgeon

Cliff Richer

Some of the more observant of you may have noticed that I have succumbed to the popular style (among birders and their ilk) of capitalizing bird names as proper nouns. I still feel its improper grammar, but this style is so widespread that I was starting to feel like a Lonesome Dove.

Another of my pet peeves for more than thirty years has been the use (and misuse) of the word environment. Since the term environment means everything

that surrounds you - good, bad or indifferent - I've always considered references to environmentalism, environmentalists and the environmental movement as being meaningless. Even worse, most of the people I've encountered who call themselves environmentalists are among the least qualified and least knowledgeable about the natural world and its workings.

Prominent among these pseudo-environmentalists are the "animal rights" groups and "plant preservationists" who look upon European Starlings, feral cats, wild burros, red foxes, eucalyptus and pampas grass with the same benign eye that they cast upon our native species.

Among the most well-known of these are the humane societies and some of the wildlife rescue groups. They acknowledge that they do not make "moral judgments" and will expend the same amount of care on a starling as on a Spotted Owl or Clapper Rail. They will also trap wild animals - particularly raccoons - who have become domestic pests and will re-release them into the wild. This poses some problems of its own. They rarely survey the areas into which the animals will be released. The area may already be beyond its carrying capacity for raccoons and they may be condemning the animal to death by starvation or they may be contributing to the out-migration of other raccoons into urban and suburban neighborhoods. Even worse, they may be introducing it into a habitat where other species are already struggling to survive against natural and introduced predators.

Also, before they release the animals the rehabilitators inoculate them against canine distemper and other diseases. This removes one of the nature's principal controls on the population. Distemper is one of the few natural enemies of the raccoon and the skunk. The current epidemic of this disease sweeping Marin and some of the other Bay area counties is the natural way that overpopulation of these species is controlled.

As for those who defend introduced species: They just do not understand how an ecological system comes into being and how an introduced species can wreak havoc on that system. The system is developed over millions of years. During this time some species run amok and then become extinct. Others fail to survive in

the evolving system and also become extinct. What is left is a self-sustaining system that can cope with the variations of local weather and climate and in which its resident and visiting species are co-dependent. Over the years it becomes a balanced system. Mutations and changes occur but within an evolutionary timetable. The other species adapt to these changes and a new balance is achieved. When a totally new species is introduced to the system, one of two things happen. The most common is that the introduced species cannot fit itself within the system and dies out. Most of our farm crops and ornamental plants fall into this category. (If they didn't our hills would be covered with cotton plants, almond trees and blue grass.) Unfortunately a few of the introduced species thrive in the new system and come to dominate it. As a result



many of our hills are covered with eucalyptus and pampas grass.

Nevertheless, despite its misuse, I've finally (but reluctantly) come to accept the view that the term environmentalist is acceptable when referring to those people who are interested in the preservation and restoration of the natural world. But that doesn't mean that I will accept its misuse and mis-application by the media, the "wise use" people or the conservative pundits of talk radio.

And finally, one of my other pet peeves is the so-called "paperless" revolution. It seems to me that the increased use of computers - which was supposed to have decreased the need for using paper - has actually resulted in the generation of millions of pages of useless (and unread) reports, press releases and junk mail that clog our wastebaskets and landfills.

See you in the fall!

Letters To The Editor

...And Some Editorial Comments

Redwood City
April 14, 1996

I read with interest the letter from Mr. Richer titled "Environmentally Incorrect Thinking". Obviously Mr. Richer has taken a wrong tack. I do not use a shower head with a flow restrictor - rather, one which can be turned off with the push of a button, then take a "Navy shower": wet down, turn off water, soap up, turn on water and rinse off.* I also did a simple experiment. I put the plug in the tub then took my shower. The water in the tub did not reach to the back of the tub - probably less than two or three gallons.

Three or four years ago, I had to replace my forty-year-old toilet. I replaced it with a model that takes 1.5 gallons per flush. I rarely (not one time in twenty) have to flush a second time.

Sincerely,

Franklin W. Rumney

**I also took "navy showers" during the drought, but could not convince the other members of the family to follow my example.*

---(Cliff Richer)

April 9, 1996

La Honda, CA

I would like to comment on Cliff Richer's article in the April edition of the *Sequoia Needles*. I live alone and have a 1.6 gallon toilet, a low-flow shower head and an instant water heater. I have no problem with my appliances and very seldom have had to flush my toilet twice. I use about 800 gallons of water a month* and my total utility bill is about \$50. Prior to installing a swimming pool last year it was around \$31 monthly.

Successful energy conservation, like successful weight management, requires a change in lifestyle. I take GI showers and collect this water while it is getting hot in a 5 gallon plastic bucket for subsequent use in flushing the toilet. I have no trouble getting the soap out of my hair, but then I have to admit I don't have as much

hair as I used to. Perhaps using less shampoo would help.

Sincerely

Jeff Hanson

**I checked my old water bills and did the conversion from cubic yards to gallons. I found that I had consistently used less than 800 gallons a month except when one particular daughter lived at home. During the period I checked we had from two to four people living in the house.*

---(Cliff Richer)



some proofing and perform instant corrections. I sincerely appreciate their efforts as they keep me from looking more stupid than usual. Be glad you don't see the errors they catch!

²Our wet winter is probably the biggest reason why you're not seeing more birds at your feeder and bird bath. There is lots of natural food around and there are more natural water sources than in dry years. Most feeder birds are year-round residents and should not be subject to the conditions that have caused reductions in migrant populations.

--- (Cliff Richer)

...And A Final Note On Environmentally Incorrect Thinking

Cliff Richer

I did the April article partially in frustration and partially tongue in cheek. Nevertheless, it's always amazing to me when I find anyone that reads anything I have written.

Since that article, I have been informed by a plumber friend that not all low-flow toilets are equal and that some of the lower cost

ones are poorly designed and perform poorly. I have also found that this appliance's performance has improved markedly since the city of South San Francisco did some mysterious things under the street outside. It still isn't as good as my old full flow toilet (modified with water dams to reduce it to a 1.5 gallon capacity) but it is markedly better than it was last March. In any case, I am an apartment dweller and am not about to replace it with a better model at my own expense.

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A Vancouver, B.C. birder, excited about spotting a hawk outside his window, went rushing out with his binoculars - but little else. He was arrested and convicted of appearing nude in public. ("But it was a lifer, your Honor.") (A "buns" rap?) (As the Brits say, "A killer look".) (Create your own comment.)

Redwood City
April 15, 1996

You need a good proof-reader -- right on the front page in column one is a glaring mistake to this retired school teacher. "Dr. English believes *their* is room"¹

We live in Palomar Park and have seen very few birds at all this spring. We keep the bird bath filled and the bird feeder, too, but have seen very few birds!²

Too bad. I miss them.

Sincerely

Irene Kendall

¹(The Needles is essentially a "one-man show" - mine - when it comes to production, and as the old axiom goes, "the writer is his own worst proof-reader." When they have time - which is not often - Terri Simpson and Anne Moser will do

Don't Forget The Proposed By-Law Change...

previously approved by the Board of Directors. This change will be presented for approval of the members in June. The proposed changes are in bold-face type.

"Article VI - Officers. 1 The officers of the Society shall be a President, a Vice-president, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and such other officers as the Board of Directors may designate. **Two or more individuals may share a single office, if so elected by the members of the Society.** The officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of members for a term of one (1) year, or until a successor shall be selected. Vacancies occurring shall be filled for the remainder of the term by the Board of Directors."

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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.

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