

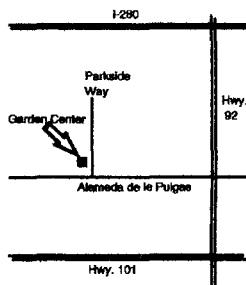
This Month's Program

Theories, Conjectures and Outright Lies



Cliff Richer will examine some of the beliefs and popular myths about birds and offer some plausible and a few highly improbable answers. The only guarantees he makes are

that the program will be about birds and will have slides. Thursday, March 13 (Doesn't that tell you something?) at the San Mateo Garden Center. Get-together begins at 7:30.



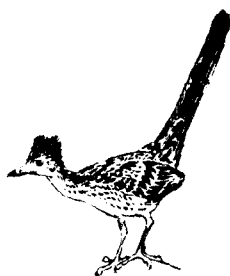
Next Month's Program

Meenakshi Nagendran, the new Director of Bird Conservation for California Audubon, will be our speaker. Mini is a PhD from North Dakota State, who has worked extensively on crane maintenance and establishment and her program is expected to feature both Sandhill and Whooping Cranes.



Look Inside

This month's *Needles* features the conclusion of Peter Metropulos' article on "Birding in Spain" (Page 6), an article by Tim Jegla on another exotic(?) birding location - St. Louis, Missouri (Page 7) and the Christmas Count results (Page Four) as well as the usual assortment of stuff.



From The President

Francis Toldi

1997 is off to a busy start for Sequoia Audubon! First and foremost, you should all be aware of the exciting news about Bair Island--the owner of the remaining unprotected tracts of Bair Island has agreed to sell the land to the Peninsula Open Space Trust. Saving Bair Island has been one of the most important and long running efforts in Sequoia Audubon history. I have found documents referring to preservation of this area in the earliest annals of SAS history. To see the final successful resolution is exciting and fulfilling. The many hundreds of individuals from various organizations that have worked on this over the years should be feeling very satisfied!

I am also pleased to announce that several individuals have stepped forward into positions of leadership within SAS. Marilyn Noah will be our 1997 Birdathon Coordinator. Marilyn has an article inside that will keep you posted on her plans to make this year's Birdathon our best one yet. Barbara Arrais has stepped in as our Publicity Chairperson. Both of these positions have been vacant for some time.

Rich Kuehn has been working for some time on establishing a presence for Sequoia Audubon on the World Wide Web. SAS member William Groll volunteered to help move the project along, and in record time we now have a website of our very own. Bill has graciously agreed to act as webmaster of the site. Check us out at <http://www.belmont.gov.orgs/sas/> Those of you without computers must think I've gone completely bonkers. Maybe I have.

Host At Audubon Canyon Ranch

Most Sequoia members are aware of the beautiful Bolinas Lagoon Preserve of Audubon Canyon Ranch in Marin County, with its spectacular heron rookery. Each year Sequoia joins other local Audubon chapters in taking a turn hosting at the ranch. Hosting is a pleasant experience, largely consisting of greeting visitors to the ranch and directing them to the appropriate docent or employee. Everyone who has taken a turn hosting has reported it to be a very pleasant way to spend a day.

This year we at Sequoia are responsible for the following dates: March 22 and 23, April 19 and 20, May 11, May 26, June 21 and 22, and July 12.

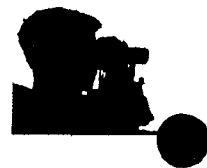
Please let me or the SAS office know if you would be interested in hosting, or if you want any additional information.

Francis Toldi

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



March

THURSDAY, MARCH 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.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8 — THE ECOLOGY OF PESCADERO MARSH

— This is a multi-faceted field trip which will deal with all aspects of the marsh's ecosystem, but of course, Pescadero Marsh is one of the premier birding spots in the county so birders need not worry that their hobby will be overlooked. The weather may be cool or warm, depending upon fog and wind conditions, so be prepared accordingly. Boots are recommended but any walking will be relatively easy and on level grades. We will meet at 9:00 A.M. at the first parking lot south of the bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy. 1. Rain cancels the trip.

LEADERS JOHN AND NINA PADLEY 345-2984

THURSDAY, MARCH 13 — GENERAL MEETING at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. An informal get-together begins at 7:30 with the General Meeting and Program at 8 PM.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15 — SAWYER CAMP TRAIL

— Come investigate the birds of this historic and scenic trail along the eastern edge of the watershed district. The birds along this path are used to lots of hikers and bikers so occasional "killer looks" are possible. To get there take I-280 to the Hillcrest-Millbrae exit. The trail begins at the west end of Hillcrest, right next to the freeway, so find a place to park and meet at the trailhead at 9:00 AM.

LEADER WERNER SCHUMANN

April

SATURDAY, APRIL 5 -- BAY AREA AUDUBON COUNCIL (BAAC) MEETING -- This particular meeting will be hosted by Sequoia. Volunteers are needed to help plan and host this function. Contact Francis Toldi or the office for details.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, MINES ROAD — This auto caravan trip winds through an isolated valley where Phainopeplas, Lewis' Woodpeckers, Lawrence's Goldfinches, Golden Eagles and Prairie Falcons are near certainties and Roadrunners, wood ducks, Wild Turkeys and Costa's hummingbirds are likely. Yet, despite its seeming isolation, you will never be more than 45 minutes away from either Livermore or Interstate 5 so that you can break away and return to civilization at any time. This is an all-day trip, ending at dusk, so bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable, with temperatures over the years varying between 40 and 90 degrees on this trip at this time of year; there are only two reliable restroom facilities - at lunchtime and at

mid-afternoon - and no dependable gas station so be prepared. To get there, cross the San Mateo Bridge and follow the signs to I-580.

Stay on 580 past Livermore to the Vasco Road exit. Take a right at the exit and follow Vasco to its end at Tesla Road. Take a right on Tesla. In less than a mile you will come to Mines Road. We will meet at that intersection at 8:30 A.M. Late arrivals will have no problem in catching up with the group if they follow Mines Road.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754

THURSDAY, APRIL 24 — SAN PEDRO VALLEY

COUNTY PARK — This park - best known for its hiking trails - provides a variety of wooded, riparian and grasslands habitat for many species of birds. At this time of year we should have a mix of migrants, summer nesters and winter residents. The trip will entail some walking along easy trails. It begins at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of the park. To get there take Highway 1 to Pacifica and, turn inland at Linda Mar Boulevard. Follow Linda Mar to its end, take a right and immediately look for the entrance to the park. The trip breaks up at noon.

LEADER JUDY SPITLER 355-9362

SATURDAY, APRIL 27 — SAN BRUNO MOUNTAIN

stands in isolation, looking a bit out of place alongside the skyscrapers of San Francisco. Yet it is home to a wealth of wildlife hidden in pockets of woodland and in sheltered canyons. We will be exploring its unique flora and fauna during this half-day trip. We will meet at the San Bruno Mountain State and County Park parking lot at 9:00 AM. To reach the park from northbound US. 101, take the Bayshore Blvd./Brisbane exit, and go north on Bayshore Blvd. about 1½ miles to Guadalupe Canyon Parkway. Turn left on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway and follow the road about two miles to the station.

LEADER AL SEUBERT

PCL Symposium — March 15

The 14th annual environmental legislative symposium of the Planning And Conservation League Foundation which, in past years, has been held in Sacramento in January is scheduled for Saturday, March 15 from 8:00 AM - 9:00 PM at the Berkeley Conference Center, 2105 Bancroft Way, in Berkeley this year.

This year's program will provide two distinct tracks — one oriented toward lobbying, legislation and policy, and another targeting grassroots and local activists by offering hands-on, how-to programs on policy development, organizing, and using the media to affect policy change.

Registration Fee: With meals \$60 No meals \$20

For further information contact: Jamie Phillips, PCL Foundation, 926 J St., Suite 612, Sacramento, 95814 or call (916) 444-8726 Ext. 86. or e-mail: phillips@quiknet.com www.pcl.org/pci/



From Your Ranch

Eileen Libby

Audubon Canyon Ranch cordially invites you to join us to celebrate its 35th Anniversary!! We want to take time now to express our appreciation for our sponsoring Audubon chapters. Thanks to you and other volunteers, we have the pleasure of opening our 35th public season on March 15th. Over the years many of you have hosted for us; you are the welcoming presence for our visitors and we look forward to your essential participation. Hosts offer map, registration cards and materials from our sponsoring chapters (YOU!) Your support has been an essential part of our founding, funding and fun. *Thanks again!*

Sign up for a day and bring friends, family and lunch. Join us at 9:30 for orientation, a review of the Preamble, a cup of coffee and catch up with an exciting place, an exciting year and excited people. Check with your Chapter Coordinator for this year's schedule. Last year we rotated weekends throughout the breeding season so everybody could have a chance to see the progression from egg to chick to fledgling, an innovation which met with much approval. If you would like to work outside your chapter's scheduled days, call the ACR office at (415) 988-9244.

We also want you to have fun, learn stuff and meet new people. You are welcome to join our scheduled activities open to all volunteers. Call us for the latest details of talks, hikes, potlucks, slide shows and who knows what else. Of special interest is the Ranch Guide refresher on herons & egrets at Picher Canyon on March 5th. Come and get acquainted, listen to biologist John Kelly, and enjoy a day on the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve.

Calendar

- **March 1** — **Gala Auction Fundraiser**, Smith Ranch Homes, San Rafael
- **March 5** — **Docent Graduation**, Dr. Luis Baptista, guest speaker, Potluck, Volunteer Canyon, Bolinas Lagoon Preserve
- **March 8** — **Herons & Egrets** with John Kelly, Picher Canyon, Bolinas Lagoon Preserve
- **March 15** — **Opening Day** of the public season
- **April 5** — **The San Francisco Watershed at Crystal Springs** with Dan Murphy
- **April 13** — **Wildflowers at Bouverie Preserve**, with Ray Peterson

Other Volunteer opportunities include our Research and Resource Management Projects: Pampas Grass, Ponds, Plant Phenology and German Ivy. Call Ray Peterson at 988-9244 for details.

The ACR Harbor Seal Study of Tomales Bay continues this year and extends to Bolinas Lagoon, educating the public and collecting data on human disturbances to reproductive success. We need volunteers to commit to an orientation training and to volunteer on weekends and weekdays at low tide periodic for several hours. Call Mary Ellen King at (707) 537-1546.

...And More Thanks

Contributors

Once again a very special thanks to those who responded so generously to our Holiday Fund-raising Letter.

WILLA DALLAS

JEAN DURICK

ARTHUR GRUEBEL

GARTH HARWOOD

GLORIA GALEN HELLER

VICKI L. HOFFMAN

COLLEEN IBARA

FREDRIC MILLER

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

AGNES PERRY

DONNA PETERSEN

CLARICE VAUGHAN

We note from the return addresses that Jean Durick is back in California from her long exile in Iowa - but still a long way from San Mateo County. Welcome back to one of our longest-standing and most faithful members.

While it is contrary to our policy to publish the amounts donated, we would like to single out these individuals for a very special thanks: **Robert Brown, Peter Metropulos, Donna Petersen, Helen Rietz, and John Young.**

Arcata - Godwit Days Festival

April 18-20, 1997

Day and Half-Day Field Trips will take you to places to look for Ruffed Grouse, Spotted Owl, and Marbled Murrelet and to enjoy shore and water birds from kayaks and small passenger craft and experience the wilds of Del Norte and Lake Earl.

Keynote **Address** by Dr. Mark Colwell, shorebird researcher at Humboldt State University, will be based on his studies in the Arctic and Siberia.

Workshops will include bird photography, bird carving, nature illustrations, backyard wildlife, and an introduction to bird watching.

For more information about Godwit Days call (707) 822-3619 or (800) 908-WING (9464). For up-to-the minute information on local bird sightings call (707) 822-LOON (5666).

Museum Education Director Honored

Lori Mann, Coyote Point Museum's education director since 1982, has been presented with the prestigious Walter E. Jeske Award by the North American Association for Environmental Education.

It is the highest award given by the NAAEE and was presented at the organization's annual conference in Burlingame.

She was cited for developing programs described as "heroic, inspiring and pioneering" ..



A sloth even sneezes in slow motion.

CHRISTMAS COUNT STATISTICS -1996

SPECIES	CS	AN	SPECIES	CS	AN	SPECIES	CS	AN	SPECIES	CS	AN
Red-throated Loon	84	167	White-tailed Kite	3	55	Thayer's Gull	60	14	American Dipper		1
Pacific Loon	576	472	Bald Eagle	1		Western Gull	1765	1089	Golden-crowned Kinglet	34	176
Common Loon	24	32	Northern Harrier	21	39	Glaucous-winged Gull	1398	230	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	189	513
Pied-billed Grebe	107	28	Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	3	Glaucous Gull*	1		Western Bluebird	45	41
Horned Grebe	40	21	Cooper's Hawk	6	7	Black-legged Kittiwake *	1	1	Townsend's Solitaire	1	
Red-necked Grebe	1	3	<i>Accipiter, sp</i>	3		Gull species	4924	368	Hermit Thrush	59	94
Eared Grebe	18	17	Red-shouldered Hawk	28	31	Forster's Tern	46	2	American Robin	1401	1031
Western Grebe	147	346	Red-tailed Hawk	73	75	Common Murre	1121	2743	Varied Thrush	250	209
Clark's Grebe	80	12	Ferruginous Hawk	1	1	Marbled Murrelet	9	37	Wrentit	48	182
<i>Aechmophorus, sp</i>	1	71	Rough-legged Hawk	1		Ancient Murrelet	7	17	Northern Mockingbird	18	4
Northern Fulmar	1	2	<i>Buteo, sp</i>	1		Cassin's Auklet	15	3	California Thrasher	4	5
Sooty Shearwater	2	3	American Kestrel	34	48	Rhinoceros Auklet	23	26	American Pipit	36	7
Black-vented Shearwater	3	1	Merlin	4	2	Rock Dove	420	73	Cedar Waxwing	310	1
Brown Pelican	156	1227	Peregrine Falcon	2		Band-tailed Pigeon	79	65	Loggerhead Shrike	4	13
Double-crested Cormorant	204	73	California Quail	232	381	Mourning Dove	750	35	European Starling	2020	1830
Brandt's Cormorant	88	286	Clapper Rail	1		Barn Owl	6	19	Hutton's Vireo	11	32
Pelagic Cormorant	28	121	Virginia Rail	5	22	Western Screech-Owl	1	5	Tennessee Warbler		1
American Bittern		2	Sora	1	5	Great Horned Owl	10	24	Orange-crowned Warbler	10	7
Great Blue Heron	24	11	Common Moorhen		1	Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	9	Nashville Warbler *	2	
Great Egret	42	7	American Coot	2970	95	Burrowing Owl	1		Myrtle	93	74
Snowy Egret	109	28	Black-bellied Plover	226	70	Long-eared Owl	1		Audubon's	165	91
Cattle Egret	1		Pacific Golden-Plover		2	Short-eared Owl *	2	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	218	656
Green Heron	2	1	Snowy Plover	15	20	Northern Saw-whet Owl	6	9	Townsend's Warbler	81	361
Black-crowned Night Heron	17	9	Semipalmated Plover	27	1	White-throated Swift	6		Hermit Warbler *		1
Greater W F. Goose	5		Killdeer	63	45	Anna's Hummingbird	113	129	Palm Warbler	2	
Brant	296	127	Black Oystercatcher	7	49	Belted Kingfisher	12	10	Black and White Warbler*	1	1
Canada Goose	248		Black-necked Stilt	85	1	Acorn Woodpecker	1	85	Common Yellowthroat	27	64
Wood Duck		12	American Avocet	1388	1	Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	8	Wilson's Warbler	1	1
Green-winged Teal	303	157	Greater Yellowlegs	7	43	Nuttall's Woodpecker		2	Western Tanager	1	
Mallard	768	102	Willet	1374	237	Downy Woodpecker	5	13	Indigo Bunting		1
Northern Pintail	461	112	Wandering Tattler	1	1	Hairy Woodpecker	2	42	Spotted Towhee	13	80
Cinnamon Teal	2	41	Spotted Sandpiper	9		Northern Flicker	45	80	California Towhee	150	135
Northern Shoveler	111	31	Whimbrel	52	47	Pileated Woodpecker *		3	Savannah Sparrow	102	83
Gadwall	113	28	Long-billed Curlew	96	2	Woodpecker, sp.	1		Fox Sparrow	41	205
Eurasian Wigeon	2		Marbled Godwit	873	33	Black Phoebe	76	106	Song Sparrow	159	525
American Wigeon	338	5	Ruddy Turnstone	1		Say's Phoebe	16	25	Lincoln's Sparrow	17	49
Canvasback	1481	41	Black Turnstone	64	124	Horned Lark	1		Swamp Sparrow*	2	2
Redhead	3		Surfbird	14	71	Tree Swallow *		5	White-throated Sparrow *		3
Ring-necked Duck	93	18	Red Knot	8		Violet-green Swallow *	75		Golden-crowned Sparrow	991	575
Greater Scaup	3264		Sanderling	208	486	Barn Swallow		1	White-crowned Sparrow	717	563
Lesser Scaup	215		Western Sandpiper	1215	7	Steller's Jay	83	162	Dark-eyed Junco	512	426
Scaup, species	1950		Least Sandpiper	268	53	Scrub Jay	135	119	Red-winged Blackbird	459	1140
Harlequin Duck		2	Dunlin	2000	8	American Crow	83		Tricolored Blackbird	17	737
Black Scoter	2	43	Short-billed Dowitcher	55		Common Raven	134	65	Western Meadowlark	562	271
Surf Scoter	1166	1352	Long-billed Dowitcher	1169	1	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	182	643	Brewer's Blackbird	1016	1527
White-winged Scoter	12	95	Dowitcher, species:	819		Plain Titmouse	10	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	49	21
Common Goldeneye	901	17	Common Snipe	8	17	Bushtit	362	346	Bullock's Oriole	1	
Barrow's Goldeneye	26		Red Phalarope		1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	10	60	Purple Finch	11	40
Bufflehead	705	75	Pomarine Jaeger	2	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	1		House Finch	463	253
Hooded Merganser	48	3	Bonaparte's Gull	2		Pygmy Nuthatch	50	57	Red Crossbill	29	144
Common Merganser	3	3	Heermann's Gull	37	89	Brown Creeper	9	53	Pine Siskin	63	668
Red-breasted Merganser	41	30	Mew Gull	420	220	Bewick's Wren	18	62	Lesser Goldfinch	38	8
Ruddy Duck	947	99	Ring-billed Gull	643	5	House Wren	2	3	American Goldfinch	138	249
Turkey Vulture	3	37	California Gull	7052	746	Winter Wren	4	95	Evening Grosbeak *	5	8
Osprey	1	1	Herring Gull	242	113	Marsh Wren	27	57	House Sparrow	190	37

CRYSTAL SPRINGS

Total birds identified
Total Species identified
Number of participants
Compilers

59918
195
44
Al DeMartino and Robin Smith

ANO NUEVO

28252
182
37

Participants - both counts:

Rick Baird Nat Bowditch Al DeMartino Merry Haveman Grant Hoyt Karen Hoyt Jim Hully Don Keller Rosalie LeKowitz Bert McKee
Peter Metropoulos Steve Miller Anne Moser Peter Popin Dave Powell Cliff Richer Barry Sauppe Robin Smith Judy Spittler Ron Thorn Francis Toldi

Participants - Ano Nuevo:

Meredith Folsom Garth Harwood Gloria Heller Will Hinman Ann MacCamman Mike McCloskey Carol Miller Kristie Nelson
Pat Pouch Steve Rottenborn Eileen Sauppe Emilie Strauss Eric Toldi John Toldi Robert Uhlvang Dave Wimpfheimer

Participants - Crystel Springs:

J R Blair Gary Deghi Sally Eastland Al Eisner Leslie Flint David Haveman Dave Hershey Chuck Hignite Al Jamarillo Ben Johnson Deanna Johnson
Trace Sain Dean Schuler Bettina Toft Tom Vanden Bosch John Waller Al Wofchuck

Metropulos to Work on Bair I. Purchase

Peter Metropulos, author of this month's article, "Birding in Spain", has been commissioned by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to serve as a wildlife consultant in connection with that organization's acquisition of Bair Island.

Peter, a long-time member of Sequoia Audubon, a highly regarded local birder and a regional editor of *Audubon Field Notes*, has been working with the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory on the documentation and preservation of the island's rich bird life.

Golden Trout Natural History Workshop

Located at the 10,000-foot level in the Cottonwood Lakes basin of the southern Sierras near Mount Whitney, Golden Trout Natural History Workshops provide a special educational adventure to individuals and families. These six-day workshops have been organized by a non-profit overseer since 1974 and provide professionally led tours of Sierra natural history. The Golden Trout Camp educational facility serves as each workshop's high altitude classroom base camp, and is one of only a few such facilities remaining inside federally designated Wilderness Areas. Workshops offer daily hikes within the Cottonwood Lakes basin and surrounding areas; evenings include exposure to the local history and talks by special guests. All meals and shelter are provided. Three 1997 sessions are offered beginning June 29 through July 19. Enrollment is limited. This is California's most unique outdoor workshop!

To receive a brochure, write to:

Cindi McKern,
Golden Trout Natural History Workshop
1230 Friar Lane,
Redlands, CA 92373
(Tel: 909-798-3060)

□□□□□□□□□□

Science is a history of superseded theories.
Anonymous

North American Bluebird Society

The 20th annual meeting of the North American Bluebird Society will be hosted by the Sea & Sage Audubon Chapter at the Sheraton Newport Beach Hotel in Newport Beach, California, right next to Orange County (John Wayne) Airport.

Scheduled Events

Thursday, May 15, 1997

1 PM - 10 PM -- Meeting registration, evening program and NABS Board of Directors meeting at 7 PM.

Friday, May 16, 1997

7 AM-4 PM -- Field trip to Newport Beach Pier & Harbor, and Yorba Regional Parks for lunch and observation of bluebird and wood duck nesting sites.

Saturday, May 17, 1997

Seminars and display tables during the day and NABS annual banquet with keynote speaker at 6:30 PM

Sunday - May 18, 1997

8 AM to noon - Field trip to Bolsa Chico Wetlands to observe bird sanctuary.

Pre-Registration deadline -- April 19
NOTE - NO REFUNDS AFTER PRE-REGISTRATION DEADLINE.
Make checks payable to: Sea & Sage Audubon. Mail registration form and payment to:

Ernest W. Schimmelman

Tel 714-693-9025

6131 Foxfield Lane

Yorba Linda, CA 92286-5824

Registration Form - PLEASE PRINT				
Name:				
Spouse/ Guest Name				
Address:				
City:				
State:			Zip:	
Telephone:				
☐ Check here if you wish a 3' x 6' display table				
	Pre- Registration	Registration	Quantity	Total
Registration	\$74.00	\$27.00		\$
Convention Pin	\$3.00	\$4.00		\$
Friday Field Trip	\$22.00	\$25.00		\$
Saturday Annual Banquet	\$30.00	\$13.00		\$
Sunday Field Trip	\$8.00	\$10.00		\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED				\$

Woodland Sugar Ponds



The Woodland Sugar Ponds have been noted in the past as a site for rare shorebirds. Unfortunately, due to abuses by fishermen, hunters, illegal dumpers and even

some birders, the City of Woodside has taken steps to close some of these locations to the general public.

Not all of the ponds are closed, but the Yolo Audubon Society has had good relations with the city in the past and is asking anyone visiting these sites to obey any signs and respect any fenced areas. Further abuses could jeopardize this relationship and lead to additional closures or to more punitive action.

GGRO Needs You!

The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) is looking for new watchers and banders.



If you want to learn how to identify the hawks, falcons and eagles of California and be part of a long-term wildlife conservation project then make a note that the GGRO is holding recruitment meetings on Thursday, April 24 and Tuesday, April 29 from 7-9 PM. If you are interested come to either meeting at GGNRA Headquarters at Building 201, Fort Mason in San Francisco. The entrance to Fort Mason is at Franklin and Bay.

Join the 230 volunteers who track the birds of prey over the Marin Headlands. A commitment of one day every two weeks from August to December is required. Training sessions will be held in July. For more information call 331-0730.

Birding In Spain

Peter Metropulos

(Continued from February)



Day #5 greeted us with cold rainy weather once more. Driving north towards the *Sierra Morena* through endless olive orchards Tom explained to us that recent aerial pesticide spraying to control olive-borers had seriously reduced songbird populations in parts of Spain. However, we did manage to see three Rollers perched on wires along this route.

While lunching along the rocky *Rio Fresnadillo* we watched a most engaging pair of Black Wheatears. They were fascinated with my imitation of their song and came in for very close-up studies. The male fanned his bright white tail and sang nonstop while bouncing from rock to rock in front of me.

Over the years Tom has developed friendships with many local land-owners and thus has gained access to private estates off limits to the public. So on Day #6 we were privileged to visit a large hunting preserve east of Cordoba. This preserve featured some very old ash, oak and elms in a narrow valley below towering cliffs. As the weather grew colder and wetter I regretted not having brought my thermal underwear.

Between cloudbursts we enjoyed a superb display of raptors soaring between the ridges. The sight of a courting pair of endangered Spanish Imperial Eagles soaring in a gorge below made us momentarily forget the prospects of impending hypothermia. Fleeing the deteriorating weather conditions we sought shelter under the eaves of a nearby caretaker's shack. A short weathered old man with bad teeth emerged from the crumbling brick dwelling clutching a large bottle of clear liquid and several glasses. "*Aqua diente*" he said, handing us each a glass of the brew. Two glasses of this "fire-water" and we had no more chills but our bird identification skills started becoming shaky and it was a minor miracle that we negotiated the narrow winding road back out of the valley.

On day #7 we visited a new habitat and elevation, the extensive pine forests

of the Sierra de Segura at 5000 feet elevation. On the mountain's lower slopes in thick cool fog we encountered montane birds new to our trip: Coal and Crested Tits, Firecrest, Bonelli's and Subalpine Warblers. Upward and beyond the pines the fog finally gave way to sunshine. We entered an alpine habitat covered with scrub, grazing sheep and scattered poplar groves. Here we added several rock-oriented birds such as Northern Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, Rock Thrush and Black Redstart to our list.

On the 8th and final day of the organized tour we bid a sad farewell to Tom's wife and children and their beautiful home in La Mancha. I had decided to hire Tom as my personal guide for an additional day and head to a region where we could see some new birds. On the way to drop the others off at the airport we paid a brief visit to a group of lagoons near *La Guardia*. On the drive in we flushed a flock of 50 Bee-eaters from a tall snag, a breathtaking explosion of color! A Purple Heron was poised motionless in a reed bed here. Above the marsh were the ruins of a tall castle and on the very top we spotted a nesting pair of Peregrines.

After the airport drop-off Tom and I sped east into higher elevation. We encountered cooler weather and rocky terrain with deciduous trees just starting to leaf out. We came upon charming mountain villages each with a white stork nesting in the steeple of its church. The feeling here was more like Switzerland than what I'd expected of Spain. Continuing up to 7000 feet we found the ground covered with a foot of snow.

Nearby, the ski resorts were just beginning to shut down for the season. Native daffodils, crocus, and hyacinths poked up from patches of soil among melting snow. A Gray Wagtail singing sweetly from the roof of a chalet announced the arrival of spring to the mountains. We passed the great walled city of Avila, through country with lush meadows, grazing milk-cows and rushing streams, and passed palaces surrounded by endless rock walls. Cuckoos perched on wires everywhere, Skylarks performed displays so high up in the sky they were invisible, and an obliging pair of Ortolan Buntings bathed at the grassy edge of a

creek. A gorgeous male Bluethroat sang enthusiastically from a hillside of thick scrub. We proceeded onwards through the *Sierra de Gredos* to *Navarredonda*, a vast wilderness of pine forests and alpine meadows at about 5000 feet. An ancient village here had several hotels. We chose to spend the evening at the Hostal Almanzor, a quaint but comfortable rustic lodge with a panoramic view of snow-capped mountains overlooking pastures where horses grazed.

Before dinner we drove to the road's end at the edge of the snow. Here I was ecstatic to see and photograph a herd of over 30 Ibex feeding along the roadside. The European equivalent of our Bighorn Sheep, they were near extinction a few decades ago. A ban on their hunting in Spain has resulted in a gradually increasing population of Ibex that are unwary and easy to approach. Several males engaged in horn butting displays while the seemingly unimpressed females watched from cliffs higher up.

The following morning (and the final day of birding) we awoke to a crisp clear day. During a pre-breakfast walk around the hotel we saw a flock of handsome gray and yellow Citril Finches feeding on the lawn. Yellow Wagtails and Northern Wheatears sang from fence posts and rock walls everywhere. Goldcrests, Pied Flycatchers and a Hobby were in the dense forest. A boldly-patterned Dipper bobbed and dunked along a raging, icy stream. Having seen nearly all the "specialty" birds of this region by noon we headed back down into the lowlands. Tom decided we had enough time to make one final stop. We checked out a new preserve near Talavera, *Laguna Azutan*, which features reed beds and willow thickets bordering a large lake. We saw roosting Cormorants and a handsome Reed-Bunting and heard several Water Rails.

At this point we put away the scope and binoculars and hit the highway, heading toward Madrid where the second half of my trip would begin. On the way I tallied up my bird list for the trip: 192 species total, of which 160 were "lifers". This was an especially good list since it included many of Europe's rarest and most sought after species.

(Continued on Page Seven)

Birding In Spain

(Continued From Page Six)

The hustle and bustle of modern, sophisticated Madrid was a stark contrast to the sleepy ancient landscapes I had previously observed. Tom dropped me off at Hotel Paris, the oldest in Madrid, right in the very heart of downtown. The hotel was elegant in classic European tradition and the staff was helpful and efficient although, despite what the



guide books say virtually no one in Spain speaks English. For \$65 per night this 4-star hotel was a bargain and its central location (within a mile of most of Madrid's tour destinations) made it possible to spend the following week enjoying my own walking tours of the city. Madrid has more museums per square mile than other city in Europe and I visited most of them (although I skipped the Museum of Torture and the Ham Museum.)

The Prado, a world-class art museum, required two full days. I also visited the Royal Palace, and the Botanical Gardens. At the Naval Museum I saw the original map of the New World drawn by Juan de la Cosa in 1500. Everywhere I turned I saw history. My favorite afternoon activity involved ordering a plate of paella and a bottle of wine and people-watching at the Plaza Mayor, one of the most magnificent public squares in Europe. I was in luck too, my arrival coinciding with the commencement of a week-long fiesta. The only draw back was my inability to get any sleep as the partying lasted nearly round-the-clock.

At the end of my week in Madrid I was exhausted but feeling very satisfied with a vacation of a lifetime. Needless to say, I would recommend Spain as a destination for those who want a birding trip with the added bonus of spectacular scenery, a rich history and culture, architecture, art, and a colorful people who know how to live life to its fullest. As they say in Madrid, "*Vivo a vivir!*" ("I live to live!"). **OLE!**

Birding St. Louis?

Tim Jegla

Are you dreaming of heading East to see the warbler migration this year? I hope to, but not to a location you might think. No, I'm not talking about Cape May, Point Peelee, Crane Creek or the Texas coast. If the weather cooperates, these places can be spectacular, with exhausted warblers literally dripping off every branch. However, the weather is most likely to favor the warblers, and when it does, they pass through to larger woodlands rather quickly. On these days, the hunters can outnumber the hunted by as much as 10-1. It can be frustrating to show up on a sparse day only to hear how wonderful it was the day or week before.

After years of hit or miss warbling at these famous concentration points (mostly Crane Creek), I was looking for a "safer" alternative, and found it when I was in graduate school at Washington University in St. Louis. Since I was on a tight budget and couldn't afford long distance warbler trips, I began exploring the local area and found it extremely rewarding. Not only do city parks serve as spectacular warbler concentration points, but the woodlands surrounding the city also provide a steady stream of migrants, a situation that guarantees good warbling throughout the month of May.

St. Louis' Forest Park, the second largest city park in the nation, is a sea of green in the middle of a vast metropolitan area. The park's 100 acre Kennedy Forest is a godsend to warblers that find themselves caught over the city after night migrations. On good days, over 20 species are possible in an hour or two of morning birding. Not surprisingly, the area is well known to local birders, and Auduboners take frequent group outings there. Among the prizes I saw one morning on my way to work this past spring were 4 Mourning Warblers, over 20 Golden-winged Warblers and numerous Ovenbirds. The park as a whole is a surprisingly good birding area with a mix of woodlands, waterways and recreational lands. My wife and I have a list of over a hundred species for the park. Black-



crowned Night Herons and Green Herons nest and I even found a Woodcock one Spring. Perhaps the crown jewel of the park are the Wood Ducks, which stay all year and nest in abundance. I have counted over 20 mothers with ducklings on a single afternoon drive home.

Exploring the woodlands to the South and West of St. Louis is also very rewarding. Their position in the heart of the Mississippi flyway guarantees warblers regardless of the weather. My favorite two locations are Castlewood and Meramec State Parks, both within an hour and a half drive from downtown. Each offers long stretches of riparian woodlands that always yield Cerulean and Prothonotary Warblers as well as both Waterthrushes. The parks also have high limestone ridges, allowing one to look

down into the canopy below. Any day in the middle of May spent at these parks will turn up 15-20 species (although it might be hard to find other birders). For those who want to go even further afield, Mingo NWR in Southeastern Missouri offers more Prothonotary

warblers than you can shake a stick at, and Roaring River State Park in Southwestern Missouri has 15 breeding warbler species.

While the St. Louis Spring migration can't match Cape May or Point Peelee on their best days, it far more reliably has very good days (and without the crowds). St. Louis birding groups looking for "Big Days" in May usually get about 120-160 bird species. Waterfowl and waders are best at Clarence Cannon NWR (on the Mississippi 1+ hours North). We found over 50 snipe in one trip last Spring, and a Buff-Breasted Sandpiper the previous August. Mississippi Kites also frequent the area. Birding in the St. Louis area is reasonably good all year, with another key attraction being the spectacular Bald Eagle gatherings at Winfield Dam. One winter I found 98 eagles around the only open hole in the ice above the dam, with many more in the surrounding trees.

So if you ever find yourself in St. Louis, especially in the Spring, don't let the thin-crust pizza get you down. Get out your binoculars and have at it!

We Really Do Appreciate It . . . Honestly!



A belated thanks to **Mollie Stone Markets** and **Lucky Stores** (particularly the San Bruno Town Centre Store) for their help in providing the refreshments for our November 2 book-signing.

We truly appreciate the support they provided and apologize for this late recognition.

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