

sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 46, No. 7
April, 1997

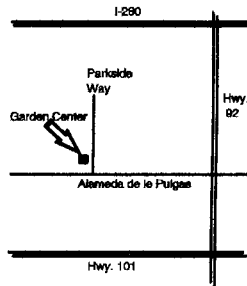
This Month's Program

Meenakshi Nagendran, the new Director of Bird Conservation for California Audubon, will be our speaker. A native of India, Mini is a Ph.D. from North Dakota State, who has worked extensively on



crane maintenance and establishment on three continents. Her program is expected to feature both Sandhill and Whooping Cranes.

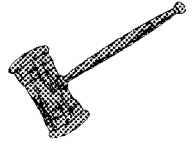
Thursday, April 10
at the San Mateo Garden Center. Get-together begins at 7:30.



From The President

PLEASE HELP SUPPORT BIRDATHON

1997 -- Birdathon is that time of year when Sequoia members take the field to count as many species as possible in a 24 hour period. Then they collect pledges for the species seen, raising needed funds for Sequoia Audubon and selected National Audubon projects. There are many ways to help with this effort. The most enjoyable is to sign up to be on a team.



BE BOLD! BE DARING! Go ahead and sign up! Bird enthusiasts of all skill levels are needed and welcome.

Look for the announcement of details elsewhere in this issue of the Needles. Feel free to call me if you have any questions about this important effort.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE TO MEET SOON -- The Nominating Committee will meet soon to draw up the list of officers and directors for our next fiscal year. If you are interested in serving as an officer or director of Sequoia Audubon, please let me know.

The agreement between Audubon and The Nature Conservancy as regards the **Kern River Preserve** is notable. For more than 16 years this 1100 acre Preserve has been owned and managed by the Conservancy which has taken significant steps to restore the riparian forests along the reaches of the Kern River above Lake Isabella. It is of special importance to birders since it is one of the few remaining nest habitats of the endangered Yellow-billed Cuckoo. For the next eighteen months, Audubon will administer the Preserve and both parties will be evaluating the desirability of transferring the property to Audubon permanently. Barring some unforeseen disaster, this property should become an Audubon preserve in 1998.

If you want to help kick off official Audubon activities at the Preserve, you can join Bob Barnes, Steve Layman and Reed Tollefson in their Red-Shouldered Hawk Workshop on Saturday April 5-6 at the Preserve. (Barnes and Layman of the Kern River Research Center are both Ph.D.'s in ornithology who have presented programs for Sequoia. Tollefson is the TNC's Preserve Manager who has joined Audubon in the same capacity.) Saturday will be devoted to workshops (following a 6 AM field trip) and Sunday will be devoted to the survey and compilation. There is no charge for this activity but a \$10 donation is requested.

Call Reed Tollefson at (619) 378-2531 to reserve a space or for more information.

Francis Toldi

The Editor

This is Birdathon Month



If you haven't yet signed up to "do" the Birdathon or support it - do it now! This year there is a super prize for the team (or individual) raising the greatest amount of money. See page 4 for details.

Oops!

We did it again! Last month's calendar showed the incorrect dates for many of our April activities. Unfortunately, I have done this several times before (and despite my best intentions, will undoubtedly do it again). When this happens rely on the day of the week rather than on the date. For example, Sunday, April 14 should have been Sunday, April 13. I've often gotten the date wrong but haven't missed on the day of the week.-- yet. Sorry about that.

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 SAS Calendar



April

THURSDAY, APRIL 3 — 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, 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.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10 — 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.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 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

TUESDAY, APRIL 22 -- EARTH DAY -- Celebrated on either the 19th or 26th by various organizations.

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

May

THURSDAY, MAY 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, MAY 3 — Details are not available at this time for the **Children's Field Trip**. This trip may be scheduled for a mid-week date. See next month's Needles for details.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10 — 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.

SUNDAY, MAY 11 — WILLIAMS SISTERS' RANCH. This ranch on Skyline Boulevard is one of Audubon's newest preserves. However, it is still a working ranch and will not be open to the public for some time. Therefore reservations will be required for this trip. Call the office (345-3724) to make your reservations to bird this little jewel.

LEADER FRANCIS TOLDI 433-0660

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, FRIDAY, MAY 23 (Optional) through MONDAY, MAY 26 — THE BIRDS OF MONO BASIN AND TIOGA PASS. The exact itinerary of this trip will be left up to the last minute as weather and travel conditions dictate much of what can be accomplished. We will be trying for high country and Great Basin species such as Great Gray Owl, Clark's Nutcrackers, Pinon Jays, Sage Grouse, Green-tailed Towhees, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows and many others. Reservations are required. Call the leader for details.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754



The future has several names. For the weak, it is the impossible. For the fainthearted, it is the unknown. For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal.

—Victor Hugo

Helping Out -- Snowy Plover Res- toration Project



If you want to be part of an exciting restoration project, join State Parks in restoring native coastal dune and bluff plant communities along a 2.6 mile stretch of the coastal trail.

Projects include seed collection, sowing seed, planting seedlings, weeding planted areas, and planting willow cuttings -- all intended to protect the nesting sites of the Snowy Plover.

To volunteer please contact Marianne Kjobmand of the Resource Ecology Department, California State Parks, Half Moon Bay State Beach (726-8801). Restoration teams meet at 10 AM Saturdays and Sundays.

Marianne and her volunteers will also lead guided walks for anyone interested in viewing the Snowy Plover nest sites at 11 AM on the first and third Saturdays of May and June (5/3, 5/17, 6/7 and 6/21). Reservations are not necessary for these walks.

Kern River Festivals

In addition to the Red-shouldered Hawk Survey mentioned on Page One, the Kern Valley Preserve and several other local organizations are sponsoring two more festivals this year.

The Kern Valley Bioregions Festival will be held from April 25 to April 27 with some Bob Barnes pre-festival field trips on the 22d, 23d and 24th. There is no fee for the festival itself and many of the events are free. However, costs of some workshops and field trips vary from \$10-15.

The Kern Valley Turkey Vulture Festival will be held on September 27-28. No details are available at this time.

For more information on either festival call the Kernville Chamber of Commerce at (619) 376-3629.

SAS Awards Prizes at SM Science Fair

A number of bird related projects were submitted by students at the 1997 San Mateo County Science Fair at Coyote Point this year. Two were singled out for awards by SAS; these were:

BIRD FEEDING, Effects of Color, Texture, Color Pattern and Seed Color by Ian McIntyre of Nueva Day School.

HOW HIGH DO THEY FLY? Do Ground Feeding Birds Have Feeder Height Preference? by Abe Nachbaur of Crystal Springs Uplands School. Abe was one of last year's award recipients.

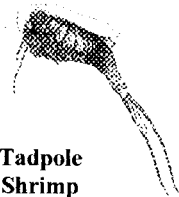
Both projects demonstrated considerable thought and preparation, as well as much time spent in wildlife observation, one of the criteria for selection by Sequoia Audubon.

Didja Know?

About vernal pools? Why are California's winter and spring mud puddles called vernal pools? Because vernal pools are restricted to areas with a Mediterranean climate and a soil structure that promotes their formation -- just like most of California.

Despite their ephemeral nature these pools support a rich and varied ecosystem. Key to this is that most of the tiny insects and crustaceans that live in these pools lay encysted eggs. These cysts have the capability of going through long dry periods and then being activated when immersed in water.

Typical vernal pool denizens include the fairy and tadpole shrimp, many species of which are endangered. The cysts can survive drought, but they cannot survive when the ground is leveled, built on or paved over so that the pool is destroyed; when the water is contaminated with pesticides or fertilizers; or when non-native plants, grazing animals and mud-loving 4-wheelers invade the pools.



Tadpole
Shrimp

More Festivals

Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival
-- April 25-27 --
Grays Harbor, WA -- Fieldtrips (\$8) and Workshops (\$5). Call Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce (1-800-321-1924) for brochure.



Godwit Days Spring Migration Bird Festival -- April 18-20 -- Arcata, CA -- \$25 fee with supplemental fees for some fieldtrips and workshops. Contact Godwit Days, City of Arcata, 736 F St., Arcata, CA 95521 (Fax [707] 822-8018).



Letter to the Editor

I just want to say thank you for sending me the Mines Road itinerary I requested last November. My friend and I visited the area last week and were rewarded with many life birds (I got 4 there). Amazingly, many of the birds were right where the itinerary said they should be! You did a great job creating the itinerary. *(I did not create it. Although I have modified it over the years, Art Edwards -- the real Mines Road expert -- gets credit for creating it. --Ed.)*. This road must be fantastic in the spring time - hope I get a chance to do it again some time.

In addition, if you should see Al DiMartini, please say thank you to him for leading me directly to a Dipper in Portola State Park. The directions he gave me when I met him on the Shearwater trip on January 12th were right on the nose! As a result, I got a great year bird and my friend got a lifer.

Again, thanks.

John Collins
Queens County Bird Club
Whitestone, NY

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It's hard for the modern generation to understand Thoreau, who lived beside a pond but didn't own water skis or snorkel.  
Bill Vaughan



# 1997 BIRDATHON

April 13 - May 4

This year's Birdathon features an award for the team which raises the highest number of collected dollars pledged: a week for two at the Rio Caliente Spa near Guadalajara, Mexico, valued at \$1240.

Located on 24 quiet acres in the pine forests of Mexico, Rio Caliente's private rooms include fireplaces. Amenities include four mineral pools, spa treatments, hiking, horseback riding and sightseeing tours. The owner/manager of Rio Caliente is a Sequoia Audubon member who writes us that Rio Caliente "...has a wonderful selection of birds who daily take fruit from their tree trays as (our guests) eat inside the dining room."

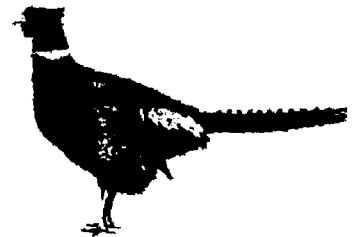
## How to Win?

Pick a day between April 13 and May 4 to go birding (or watch your feeder). Get pledges from co-workers, business associates, neighbors, and others for contributions to Sequoia Audubon Society based upon the number of species seen. Count up the number of species, collect the pledges from your sponsors and forward them to Sequoia Audubon Society.

Birdathon is FUN. It is an annual Audubon spring event which happens all over the country. Most importantly, the birds benefit. The proceeds will be used for environmental education, conservation and/or donated to established wildlife preserves.

Call Robin Smith (325-3306) or Francis Toldi (433-0660) for a complete informational package which includes:

- Birdathon Rules
- Further information on the Rio Caliente Resort
- Pledge forms
- Supporting information for soliciting pledges
- Anecdotes about successful Birdathon efforts
- Contacts for help and support!



Join us! Have fun, help the birds and possibly win a vacation in Mexico!

## Mono Lake Update

Last spring Mono Lake rose four feet under the implementation of the court-ordered restoration plan of the State Water Resources Control Board and it is expected to rise another 1-3 feet this year.

Nevertheless, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power continues to resist implementation of the court order.

Under the Stream Restoration Plan, the DWP must prepare a proposal to "restore, preserve, and protect the streams and fisheries" of the Mono Basin creeks. DWP's final proposal for the restoration of Mono Lake's tributary streams contained significant flaws.

One issue is the amount of water which will flow down the streams to create so-called peak flows, vital to the dynamic functioning of the stream systems. Peak flows do the work of shaping the stream by moving sediment,

scouring pools, flooding banks, dispersing seeds, and more. DWP's proposal for stream restoration completely ignores this requirement.

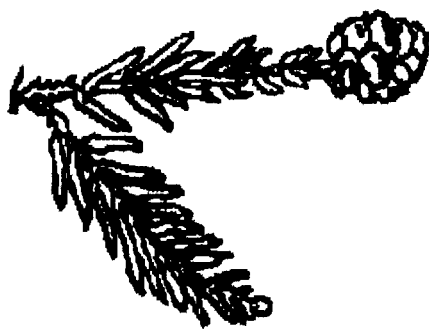
Another issue is the lack of a plan for modifying the Grant Lake Reservoir release facility. Because it was designed for diversions, Grant Lake can't deliver the recommended flows. Instead DWP has proposed a scheme to supplement Rush Creek releases with Lee Vining Creek water transferred through the aqueduct and released into Rush Creek below the dam. This ignores the effect this may have upon Lee Vining Creek and assumes that there will always be sufficient capacity to provide water for both streams.

DWP also rejects the construction of fish passage facilities at its dams.

Additionally, the DWP plan replaced the construction of sediment bypass facilities at the dams with a plan to dredge the diversion ponds and place the material in the stream below the dam.

It's proposal for restoring waterfowl habitat also falls short. Acknowledging that there is little chance of restoring this habitat along the diverted waters, the DWP proposes to enhance the habitat along Mill Creek, the DeChambeau Ponds and at some other locations. This plan is practical but ignores or glosses over the fact that DWP does not control the necessary water rights to guarantee the maintenance of that habitat. The proposal also states that these projects are "not financially feasible without significant funding contributions from other sources". Inasmuch as neither the court nor the state made any allowance for outside funding, this portion of the DWP proposal smacks of fantasy rather than fact.

The Mono Lake Committee and its allies (including National Audubon) have filed their objections to the inadequacies of this plan. The court's decision on the plan is expected this fall.



## SPRING 1997 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

**ALL ORDERS WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY WEDNESDAY APRIL 16TH!**

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation and education programs

Please check preferred pickup location. Pickup dates will be April 24-27, 1997 with details to be advised later.

☐ San Bruno

☐ Burlingame

☐ Belmont

☐ Half Moon Bay

☐ Pacifica

☐ San Mateo

☐ Atherton

|                                             |         |         |      | # BAGS | \$-COST-\$ |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------|--------|------------|
| AUDUBON WILD BIRD MIX.....                  | 20 lb @ | \$ 9.50 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |
| red & white millet plus black oil sunflower |         |         |      |        |            |
| RED/WHITE MILLET MIX .....                  | 20 lb @ | \$ 8.50 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |
| BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER.....                    | 25 lb @ | \$13.50 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |
| WHITE PROSO MILLET .....                    | 25 lb @ | \$ 9.00 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |
| THISTLE .....                               | 5 lb @  | \$10.00 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |
| SUNFLOWER CHIPS.....                        | 25 lb @ | \$25.00 | /bag | _____  | = _____    |

**STOCK UP FOR SUMMER!**

**THE NEXT SEED SALE WILL BE HELD IN LATE OCTOBER!**

**SALES TAX IS INCLUDED IN ALL PRICES ABOVE**

Contribution to Sequoia Audubon Society (tax deductible) \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK # \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose a **stamped self-addressed envelope** to receive your order confirmation and directions to your pickup location.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your check and order to

**SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

30 West 39th Avenue, Suite 202

San Mateo, CA 94403

# San Luis NWR Doubles to 22,000 Acres

Gary Zahm has survived the tough times in the northern San Joaquin Valley and the hottest resource issue of the decade - wildlife deformities and death at Kesterson Reservoir.

Now, 12 years later, as project leader of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, he continues to be the consummate conservationist, pushing to reopen 28 miles of the controversial San Luis Drain that created the Kesterson disaster. The drain, known as the Grassland Bypass, will begin taking agricultural drainage water-laced with selenium and trace elements this year. There will be some major differences.

"The drainage is just moving out of 90 miles of canals and ditches in the Grassland Wetlands, which will be of great benefit to the habitat on national wildlife refuges, state wildlife areas and privately-owned marshes," he said. "You're not going to get any additional drainage to that which has flowed into the San Joaquin River since 1983. You're just putting it into one canal."

While Zahm never backs away from a fight to protect the 160,000 acre Grassland Wetlands, California's largest, contiguous natural marsh - he is happiest when he talks about the progress he's seen take place on his national wildlife refuge complex, a federal area that has more than doubled in size since Kesterson made headlines around the world. "Kesterson and a number of recent acquisitions west of the San Joaquin River are going to come under the umbrella of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge," Zahm said.

Acquisitions include:

- The 5,600 acre Freitas Ranch, which was purchased through the Department of Justice (a litigation settlement over Kesterson), that was later transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation and administratively handed over to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The 140-acre Chee Property, situated along Highway 140, that was bought by the federal government to finish up the corner of the refuge. The Chee

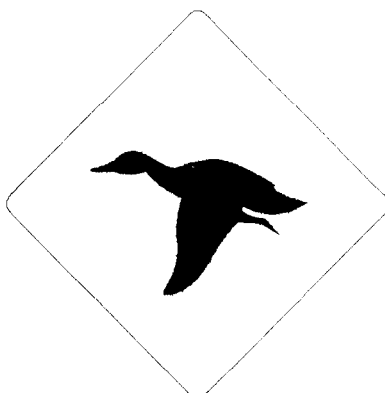
Ranch will be restored to wetlands, vernal pools and grasslands and incorporated into Kesterson's spaced blind program.

The 600 acre Claus Ranch, known as the Blue Goose Unit, which opened to public hunting this year.

All this land was added to Kesterson -- which boasts about, 4,600 acres of pristine habitat -- increasing the entire unit to close to 11,000 acres.

Zahm said the 1300 acre Kesterson Reservoir was taken over by the Bureau of Reclamation. "We no longer have any ties to the reservoir at all," he said. "The Bureau of Reclamation transferred the good parts of the refuge to us."

Under Zahm's vision, all of the



aforementioned acreage will be incorporated into the San Luis NWR, which already includes San Luis Island and the West Bear Creek Unit, formerly the of Gallo Ranch property.

In all, the San Luis NWR will boast 22,000 acres and be managed in 5 units.

Zahm said, "With a firm water supply guaranteed under the Central Valley Protect Improvement Act, this very large refuge complex will be outstanding. A combination of all the units will produce native grasslands, natural channels, riparian areas, seasonal and permanent wetlands.

"In addition, we are planning lots of restoration within the river bottom - with better water distribution and tree planting. There will be nothing like it in the entire Central Valley, I can tell you that."

Under optimal conditions he believes more than 10,000 ducks - mallards, cinnamon teal, gadwall and wood ducks could be produced on San Luis

About public hunting programs, Zahm is pleased with the opportunities already found on the San Luis. Kesterson.

Blue Goose and Freitas units.

"Our totally blind hunting programs on Kesterson and the Blue Goose units are well known," he said. "So is the free-roam hunting on San Luis.

"One of the lesser-known opportunities is on the Freitas Ranch, where we have permitted waterfowl hunting on Salt Slough and the San Joaquin River flood channels for boaters only. These waters get tremendous use and some of the best mallard and teal shooting imaginable."

Boaters put in off Highway 140 and Highway 165 at relatively primitive launch sites.

"I don't know if there is another public area in the valley where people have that kind of hunting experience," Zahm said.

Public use on the West Bear Creek unit is still a ways off. A portion of the water delivery system is in place, and this spring and summer the US Fish and Wildlife Service will start to restore the wetland base. That effort won't be completed until 1997.

"I don't know when West Bear Creek will get into operation for public use," Zahm said. "We have no staff or operational funding. However, we do have the money to restore it. First, the water system has to be completed. If you don't have water, you have nothing."

Public hunting on the unit depends on staffing and operational funding.

There's enough room to accommodate everyone's interests - including wildlife - on 'West Bear Creek,' Zahm said. "There are so many unique features on the unit and many endangered species, too. We must consider impacts of public use on them. However, we've done that at Kesterson and we've got an outstanding public hunting program over there."

These days, it is clear that Zahm is feeling immense satisfaction over progress at the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge and its doubling in size.

"We have to look at the entire picture," he said. "We'll be losing a tremendous amount of habitat to urban expansion in the next 40 years. What may look like abundant amounts of land right now may be very scarce in the decades to come.

"We're simply preserving the future potential for these areas and the wildlife that depend upon them."

## What Gull Is That?



Birders who pride themselves on identifying those gulls that don't look quite right should take caution from a public tiff between two well-known ornithologists. The argument is between Agnar Ingolfsson and Richard Snell. In-

golfsson has reported, starting in 1970, that there is extensive hybridization between Herring Gulls and Glaucous Gulls in Iceland. Snell has countered that Ingolfsson's hybrids are actually European herring gulls from a population with whiter wings. The argument is highly technical, revolving around sample sizes, melanin indices, and disagreements over statistical approaches.

The breeding gulls of Iceland have been studied rigorously for more than 20 years, and a great deal of data is available. Yet two gull experts cannot agree on what they are looking at, measuring, and collecting. The taxonomy of large, white-headed gulls is a quagmire at best. (Some taxonomists even insist they are all Iceland Gulls). Such confusion and disagreement among the expert scientists should give pause to those who cavalierly identify oddly plumaged gulls.

## So Long Northern, Welcome Back, Bullock's

The re-classification of the Northern Oriole back into two separate species was long overdue and is now a fact.

Many feel that the lumping of these species was based on politics rather than science in the first place and never should have been endorsed by the American Ornithologists' Union. The scientist who proposed that the birds were one species was one of the most prominent and well-known members of the AOU and his colleagues felt uncomfortable questioning the validity of his work even though they privately criticized almost every aspect of it. Was it just coincidence that the AOU reversed its earlier decision (with very little debate) almost immediately following his death?

*Sequoia Audubon Society*

## Nest Parasitism

Although interspecific nest parasitism is well known in waterfowl, little is known about how the host species reacts to the presence of other bird's eggs in the nest. This is especially true of cavity-nesting waterfowl, where any attempt to eject the intruder's eggs creates significant risks for the host species' eggs. Now there is evidence that the hosts do recognize eggs other than their own, and that they have evolved a system to deal - somewhat - with the situation. In "Responses of Nesting Mergansers to Parasitic Common Goldeneye Eggs" (Animal Behavior 46:1226-1228, 1993), M. L. Malloy and P. J. Weatherhead reported that female Hooded and Common Mergansers, both frequent victims of parasit-



ism by Common Goldeneyes, responded by moving the Goldeneye eggs to the periphery of the clutch. Because all eggs in the nest were numbered as part of the study, the observers discovered that the mergansers regularly shifted the position of the eggs in the clutch, presumably so that each received equal time at the center. Eggs at the center of the clutch receive more heat during incubation. The birds did not rotate Goldeneye eggs into the center of the clutch, however, and when the experimenters moved the Goldeneye eggs away from the periphery, the mergansers moved them back. While the strategy does not stop all Goldeneye eggs from hatching, it minimizes the chance that the Goldeneye eggs will hatch first, and that the females will desert their still-incubating eggs to follow the young Goldeneyes away from the nest.

## Yum, Yum..

We all know that swifts eat insects, but the real numbers are staggering. As part of a larger study of the biology of one species, E. Bull and R. C. Beckwith ("Diet and Foraging Behavior of Vaux's Swifts in Northeastern Oregon," The Condor 95:10161023, November 1993) calculated the number of trips each swift made daily to feed nestlings, and how many prey items were delivered to the

young. In an average of 47 trips a day, the adults delivered an average of 5,344 insects to their nestlings. Using an average nestling period of 29 days, more than 154,000 insects were delivered to each nest before the young took wing and began to feed themselves. These totals do not include the number adults ate.



The diversity of the prey taken was great, with true flies, leafhoppers, mayflies, flying ants, and bark beetles predominating. A disproportionate amount of time was spent foraging over water, indicative of the large number of flying insects found there.

## Trade-Offs Boats And Ducks

The Keokuk Pool, on the Mississippi River bordering Iowa, is an important migratory stopover for diving ducks, with more than 250,000 birds a day recorded in 1986 and 1987. In the last decade however, duck numbers there have declined at more than four times as fast as the decline in breeding populations.

The cause, it seems, is human disturbance from recreational boaters. On average, ducks were flushed four to six times a day, resulting in a significant expenditure of energy and loss of feeding time. The authors of the survey, Stephen Havera, Lonie Boens, Michelle Georgi, and Robin



Shealy recommend that areas of the river be designated as no boating zones during migration. The boating lobby is expected to oppose any restriction to access.

## Common Eiders: Net Loss

Clam culturing is a growing industry in the Northeast and some of the sites are protected by underwater nets. At one site near Provincetown, Massachusetts, more than 50 common eiders were found dead in the nets, following the discovery of almost 150 eiders washed up on shore.

## Orange-Loving Parrots

Efforts to save two endangered parrots in Dominica have proven successful but are creating a new problem. The parrots now pose a threat to the citrus crops on the island.

# Gifts and Bequests

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

**Paul Armer**

**Virginia Clifford**

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.

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