

sequoia needles

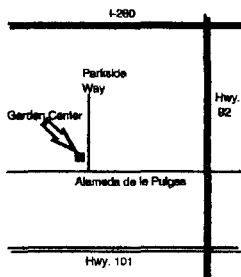
Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 47, No. 2
October, 1997

This Month's Program

Ice, Inuits & Ivory Gulls

Anne Moser and Robin Smith will share their adventures birding in the High Arctic last June. Marvel at the rugged beauty of Baffin Island. See the Inuit outfitters in action pulling the komatiks with their snowmobiles across the ice. Stand vicariously at the floe edge. Feel the tundra just coming into bloom. See some really spectacular birds.

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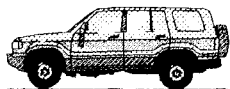


Electric Vehicles Get Ho-Hum Reception

In the first 6 months after introducing its EVI electric car, General Motors had leased a total of 185 vehicles. Despite efforts to portray it as a "sporty, high-performance two-seater", the public saw it as a too-slow, too-small, too-expensive experiment.

As a result, GM reduced the lease price to \$399 a month. The lease price includes all maintenance, road service and a charging unit.

Nevertheless, Honda chose to keep its \$499 lease price. No figures were available on how its EV car was doing as of press time.



In the meantime, the most popular cars in California continue to be heavy, gas-guzzling four wheel

drive vehicles that the federal government technically classifies as trucks — thus excluding them from the federal mandates on fleet gas mileage.

Anyone who wishes to keep up with the progress of electric car sales and development can do so by consulting the Planning and Conservation League web page at <http://www.pcl.org/pcl>.



From the President

I am pleased to announce two additional volunteer appointments. Sue Cossins, well-known to all active Sequoia Audubon Members, has agreed to serve as Chairperson of

Hospitality at our General Meetings. I urge any members that have not yet been to one of our General Meetings to attend the next one. While there, look for Sue and she will help you get acquainted with the friendly people that make up our Society.

Tim Jegla will be serving as our Programs Coordinator, assisted from time to time by Adrian Waterston. I'm sure that Tim has many interesting programs planned for the upcoming year. Give him a call or drop him a note if you have any ideas or suggestions.

From time to time Sequoia Audubon is honored to receive a bequest from the estate of a deceased member. As our regular income barely covers our regular expenses; these special funds allow us to pursue important projects that are not otherwise possible. I recently sent on to National Audubon a substantial check from the estate of a longtime Sequoia Audubon member. The reason why it went to National instead of Sequoia? The will designated "National Audubon Society," located at the Sequoia address. A bequest to National is a fine thing, but if you want your gift to go to Sequoia, be sure to name Sequoia! Remember that we are an independent tax-exempt non-profit corporation! We are also happy to earmark funds received for specific purposes.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions.

Frances Toldi



Welcome to 650

Our new area code will pose some problems. It has been our custom to omit the area code from all 415 numbers.

Although the new area code will not become effective for some months, from this issue on we will omit the area code from all 650 numbers, and include the 415 prefix on all San Francisco and Marin numbers.

—Editor

If you've been to Australia and seen the nets that protect their beaches, you probably thought they were to protect you from sharks. Nope — jellyfish. One of these floating predators, the box jellyfish, is the most venomous creature on earth and can kill you in 4 minutes.



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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2 — BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members are welcome. Please call ahead to be sure to confirm time and space.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5 — HAWK HILL AT GGNRA — This is a traditional time and place to watch hawks gather their courage to cross the Golden Gate. Accipiters outnumber all other species combined so everyone should have a chance to test their pet theories on how to distinguish between Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. However, Bald and Golden Eagles, Swainson's and Broad-Winged Hawks and Goshawks have all been observed from here in past years. Bring lunch, liquids and layered clothes. Our leader has acquired her expertise in 7 years of hawk-watching for the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory. We will meet at the base of Hawk Hill at the point where Conzelman Road becomes one-way. To get there take 101 across the Golden Gate Bridge and exit almost immediately on Alexander Street. Swing back under the freeway and follow the road up the hill.

LEADER

LESLIE FLINT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9 — GENERAL MEETING — ICE, INUITS and IVORY GULLS with Anne Moser and Robin Smith 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.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10 through SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12. The California Exotic Pest Plant Council (CalEPPC) will hold **Symposium '97: Reaching Out and Keeping Out** in Concord, October 10-12, 1997. The symposium deals with the threat to California's natural ecosystems by invasive non-native plant species introduced to California. Lectures and panels on Friday and Saturday. Field trips on Sunday. To receive an invitation or more information contact Sally Davis, 31872 Joshua Drive, Apt. 25D, Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679-3112; 714-888-8347.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11 — BEGINNERS' TRIP TO MOUNTAIN VIEW FOREBAY AND SHORELINE PARK.

This area affords some of the most varied shorebird and waterfowl wintering habitat in a small area and in every year it has produced a surprise bird or two. The trip will involve walking on level well-defined paths. We will meet at 9:00 AM at the foot of San Antonio Rd. near the entrance to Mountain View Shoreline Park. To get there, take Hwy. 101 to San Antonio Rd. and take the San Antonio Rd. (North) exit. Follow San Antonio Road for a short distance until it makes a right angle turn and becomes Terminal Road. Stop and park as close to the intersection as feasible.

LEADER

ROBIN SMITH

325-3306

(Continued on Page Three)



News from Your Ranch

Betsy Stafford

Bolinas Lagoon Preserve — Spring '97 at Bolinas Lagoon was full of squawking (87 heron and egret nests), squealing (2000 4th & 5th graders), scoping (11,843 visitors), and greeting (535 Docent days, 176 Ranch Guide days, and 136 Host days).

Special thanks go to our wonderful **Weekend Hosts** from the chapters. You generously volunteered your Saturdays and Sundays to welcome 7428 guests to our Preserve and answered thousands of questions about herons, trails, pond critters, public facilities, parking, Snowy Egrets, and the like. We hope you enjoyed the hours spent under the noisy Great Blue Heron Tree as much as we enjoyed having you there.

Bouverie Preserve — The docents at Bouverie taught 79 third and fourth grade classes this past spring and are now busy training 25 new docents this fall and winter.

This beautiful preserve in Sonoma's Valley of the Moon will conduct three more **Guided Nature Walks** on Saturdays this year. Because of such high demand, reservations are now conducted by lottery; please call (707) 938-4554 at least six weeks prior to the walk.

Reflections of Cypress Grove — Forty local artists spent a gorgeous April weekend drawing inspiration from the natural beauty of Cypress Grove on Tomales Bay. The results will be featured in a special Show and Sale of their sculpture, watercolors, oils, and photography on October 5-6, noon to 5 PM at Cypress Grove Preserve. For more info, call (415) 868-9244. Part (25%) of the sales will aid the preserve and is tax-deductible.

Some More ACR Dates for Your Calendar:

Research and Resource Management — Bolinas Preserve: Saturdays, Sept. 13 & Oct. 18. Contact Ray Peterson at (415) 968-9244 to volunteer to study the stewardship of natural resources.

The Way They Lived — Bouverie Preserve: Sat., Oct. 18. Learn about the original people of Sonoma County on a walk with Foley Benson and John Petersen. \$30. Call (415) 968-9244.

Fall Work Party at Bouverie Preserve: Sat. Oct. 11. Come help spruce up the preserve, and we'll provide the FREE lunch. Call (707) 938-4554 so we can plan on enough FREE food!

Fall Work Party at Bolinas Lagoon Preserve: Sat. Nov. 8 at Volunteer Canyon. Come help us on the trails, in the native plant garden, in the library. Call (415) 968-9244 so we can plan on enough FREE food for your lunch.

Ranch Guide Training at Bolinas Lagoon Preserve: Six Saturdays starting Feb. 7, 1998. Training by our four biologists includes ponds, herons and egrets, trail techniques, Ranch history. For info, please call (415) 968-9244



People don't ask for facts in making up their minds. They would rather have one good, soul-satisfying emotion than a dozen facts.

—Robert Keith Leavitt



The S A S Calendar

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21 — COYOTE POINT FIELD TRIP A special week-day field trip to explore the birds and environmental assets of this very special area. The trip will begin at 9:00 AM. We will meet at the lower end of the museum parking lot near the picnic benches. **RAIN CANCELS THE TRIP.**

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4 — REDWOOD SHORES — This area is quite productive in birdlife, particularly shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl. Meet near the water treatment plant. Take the Holly St./Redwood Shores Blvd. exit east from Hwy. 101 and follow it to its end. **RAIN CANCELS THE TRIP.**

LEADER NICK COIRO 349-1834

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6 — BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING at the Sequoia Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members are welcome. Please call ahead to be sure to confirm time and space.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8 — SHARP PARK SHORE AND GOLF COURSE — Judy Spitler. See next month's *Needles* for details.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 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. See next month's *Needles* for details.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15-16 — THE SACRAMENTO WILDLIFE REFUGES, GRAY LODGE AND THE BUTTES. Biologists are predicting a "crash" in the Snow Goose population so this may be your last chance for a while to see the clouds of geese we have been treated to the last few years. This is a car-caravan tour since walkers tend to disturb the wildlife. We will meet at 7:00 AM in the parking lot of the Blue Gum Motel on Saturday morning and again at 9:00 AM in the parking lot of the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. The motel is just off I-5, 3 miles beyond Willows. Take the next off-ramp after the motel's sign and turn right onto Blue Gum Road. At the end of the road turn left. The motel is approximately 1/4 mile on the left. There are other motels in Willows and along I-5 and camping at the state park in Colusa. Motel reservations are advised. **Trip reservations are required** so that we may know how many to expect at each rendezvous point. Call the leader for more information and for your trip reservation.

WILLOWS' MOTELS All area Code 916

Blue Gum Motel 934-5401 Casa Linda 934-4224
Crossroads West 934-7028 Golden Pheasant 934-4603
Grove Motel 934-5067 Super 8 Motel 934-2871
Western Motel 934-3856 Willows Motel 934-4778

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754

1997 SAS CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT

This is a generic report intended as a general overview of the chapter's financial condition, and should not be considered a complete picture for budgetary and accounting purposes.

BALANCE SHEET AND STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR A 12-MONTH PERIOD
FROM JULY 1, 1996 TO JUNE 30, 1997 OR FROM 6/1/96 TO 5/31/97

REVENUES		
NAS Chapter Dues Share	7,728	
Requests	3,640	
Grants/Contributions	252	
Educational Events	4,279	
Fundraising Events	4,564	
Interest and Investments	14,578	
Sales (Specify) Birding Book, Birdsong, Newsletter		
Other (Specify)		
Total Income		39,411
EXPENDITURES		
Administration	13,406	
Newsletters/Postage/Mailing	5,955	
Education Programs & Events	1,920	
Fundraising	246	
Regional/State Offices/State Council	458	
Grants/Contributions to Others (Specify)	1,536	
Other (Specify) Birding Book Publishing & Sale, Birdsong	14,670	
Total Expenditures		37,688
NET INCOME (OR DEFICIT) IN OPERATING FUNDS		(3,047)
BEGINNING BALANCE		0
ENDING BALANCE		(3,047)
ASSETS		
Cash & Equivalents (Checking, Savings, etc.)	2,454	
Investments (Stocks, CDs, etc.)	113,833	
Accounts Receivable (Owed by Chapter)	189	
Other (Specify) Deposits: Reserve for Uncomm. Comp.	478	
Net Fixed Assets (Furniture, Equipment, but do not include the Value of Land or Buildings)	6,585	
Total Assets		132,539
LIABILITIES & FUNDS BALANCES		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable (Owed by Chapter)	304	
Unearned Income (Not Credited in This Fiscal Year)		
Other (Specify)		
Total Liabilities		304
Funds		
Restricted (Endowments, Scholarships, etc.)	44,490	
Reserved (Committed to Specific Programs)		
Unreserved (Not Committed)	87,738	
Total Fund Balances		132,228

A full-sized copy is available from the office. Just send us a self-addressed, stamped envelope and a note stating it is for the financial report and we will send it to you.

Duck Numbers Up



For the fifth consecutive year, breeding ducks across the North American continent have made impressive gains according to surveys conducted by the US Department of Fish and Game. Overall, the number of breeding ducks increased by 13 percent over last year, and 31 percent since 1955.

Northern pintail increased 30 percent over 1996, but were still 19 percent below the long-term. American Widgeon, another species that has been in decline, rebounded by 37 percent — some 19 percent over the long term.

Breeding populations of Mallards climbed 25 percent, Shovelers increased by 19 percent, Gadwalls by 31 percent and Green-winged Teal remained steady.

Favorable weather conditions along with the millions of acres of wetlands restored in the past decade through the action of federal subsidies and by Ducks Unlimited and other similar groups are credited for the increases.

The duck breeding survey samples 1.3 million square miles across the north-central United States, Alaska and western and northern Canada, and estimates the approximate numbers of ducks in important breeding areas.

Bair Island

Where, What, Why...

Cliff Richer

I first heard about Bair Island while I was a student in Joe Morlan's birding classes some 17 years ago. Since then we've seen it slated for development three times, seen it invaded by red foxes (which ruined the tern and snowy plover colonies and the heron rookeries) and seen it saved twice. Hopefully, this time it will stick.

The last time I had any update on the sale, it was still only a letter of intent and no money had changed hands. Even after the sale is finalized, the Peninsula Open Space Trust will face the twin problems of raising \$10 million in private donations and prying \$5 million from the federal trust fund before transferring the property to the National Wildlife Refuge System. We hope that the anonymous angel who loaned \$15 million to POST is patient in waiting for repayment.

For those of you who don't have a 17 year (or longer) background with this battle-scarred island, Bair Island is actually three (or five, depending on the tide) islands between Redwood Shores and the Port of Redwood City. In 1869, it was the site of a fishing village and over the following 50 years was diked and drained. Fred Bair — for whom the island is named — farmed it in the 20's.

Following World War II, Leslie Salt began tailoring the island for salt evaporation and used it for this purpose until 1965, when a subsidiary, Leslie Properties, began filling and developing some of these properties around the bay. Foster City was finished and the industrial-office sections of Redwood Shores was well underway before Leslie began feeling any real resistance. At that point Leslie unloaded Bair Island onto Mobil Oil's development subsidiary.

Mobil planned a large residential development for the bulk of the island. In a well-planned public relations move they donated 800 marshy acres to the state, which turned it over to the National Wildlife Refuge for management. These 800 acres did not include the spectacular heron rookeries or the tern nesting colonies. This proved to be a mistake as these features were to be an important part of

the environmentalists' arguments for the preservation of the island.

Mobil's development plans were approved by Redwood City, but were stopped at the county level by a public referendum in 1982.

In the late 80's and early 90's the Japanese began to buy foreign properties, notably in the US and Australia. Kumagai Gumi purchased Bair Island and began to make preliminary moves to go forward with Mobil's development plan.

This time the conservationists were ready and a well-orchestrated plan of resistance was organized under the National Audubon Society's banner.

In my opinion, Kumagai had already suffered serious losses, when the bottom dropped out of the speculative property market in 1990 and when the value of the dollar continued to fall as compared to the yen. In addition, the strength of the resistance to their plan was daunting.

Taking these facts into consideration, I suspect POST's \$15 million offer looked very good to the Japanese. They could recoup most of their losses, earn some good press and avoid what looked to be a nasty fight. Let's support POST's fund-raising and — when the time comes — write our senators and representatives to get them to release their share of the money.

Let's return Bair Island to the birds!

Governor Sued

The alleged misuse of dedicated funds for the purpose of balancing the budget is a source of concern to the California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS) and California Trout. These two organizations have been joined by the Planning and Conservation League (PCL) in suing the governor because he vetoed language designed to protect these dedicated funds.

Members of the Legislature are also concerned that funds collected from fishermen to protect salmon and steelhead against future offshore oil spills; and from hunters to protect game species are being spent to support administrative bureaucracy in the Department of Fish and Game, and not for the purposes for which they were created. The Legislature included

language in the budget last year requiring that the administration spend the money properly. The governor vetoed the language even though he approved the appropriations.

The Chinese Mitten Crab

It appears that our Bay is becoming as afflicted with invasive alien species as are our hillsides. The latest to be reported is the Chinese mitten crab, *Eriocheir sinensis*, which first made its appearance in the South Bay in 1993.

It is distinguished by mats of fibrous hairs on the front of the claw. This crab presumably arrived from China in the ballast water of ships.

It is planktonic, drifting along in the water circulation during the larval stage of its life. As an adult, it is the only catadromous crab in the US, living in rivers and traveling into the bay to reproduce. It is thereby able to tolerate a wide range of salinity.

Since its introduction its numbers have greatly increased. In some places juvenile densities reach as high as 24 crabs per square millimeter and by last summer the Chinese Mitten Crab had moved its way north into the Delta.

It is listed as a federally injurious species and anyone in possession of one without the proper permit could be fined. It is able to bore through levees and is known to possess an internal parasite called the Oriental Lung Fluke *Paragonimus westermani* which can be fatal to humans if ingested. The fluke has not been found in any of the local crabs, possibly because a small snail in which the parasite originates is not found in the Bay.

The long term effect that this species will have on the ecosystem is yet to be evaluated, but the potential is disastrous and it is under intensive study by several federal and state agencies.

(Condensed from an article in *Between the Tides*, newsletter of the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Spring 1997 issue, by Ranger Deirdre Hall of the Reserve.)

FALL 1997 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

ALL ORDERS WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY WEDNESDAY OCT. 8TH!!

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation and education programs

Please check preferred pickup location. Pickup dates will be Oct. 16-19, 1997 with details to be advised later.

☐ San Bruno	☐ Burlingame	☐ San Carlos	☐ Half Moon Bay
☐ Pacifica	☐ San Mateo	☐ Atherton	

				# BAGS	\$-COST-\$
AUDUBON WILD BIRD MIX.....	20 lb @	\$ 9.00	/bag	_____	= _____
red & white millet plus black oil sunflower					
RED/WHITE MILLET MIX	20 lb @	\$ 8.50	/bag	_____	= _____
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER.....	25 lb @	\$12.50	/bag	_____	= _____
WHITE PROSO MILLET	25 lb @	\$ 8.50	/bag	_____	= _____
THISTLE	5 lb @	\$ 7.50	/bag	_____	= _____
SUNFLOWER CHIPS.....	25 lb @	\$24.50	/bag	_____	= _____

THE NEXT SEED SALE WILL BE HELD IN FEBRUARY '98!

LOOK FOR DETAILS IN THE FEBRUARY NEEDLES

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
 345-3724

Seabirds in Danger

William J. Sydeman & Claire Peaslee, in an article in the *Observer*, the newsletter of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory, point out that two species of seabirds — Xantus' Murrelet on Santa Barbara Island and the Ashy Storm-Petrel on Southeast Farallon — may be in danger of disappearing.

Concerned about both species, PRBO has applied a new and powerful statistical program to the problem. Called Population Viability Analysis (PVA), the software can predict how fast a population is decreasing and identify which factors are significant to this trend.

An important feature of the PVA is its ability to include environmental variability: thus, both short-term changes (such as annual variability in food availability) and long-term changes (such as climate change) can be incorporated in predictions of future population size.

PVA has been used to examine threatened populations of terrestrial vertebrates, such as the Spotted Owl, Peregrine Falcon, Snail Kite, and desert tortoise, but has not yet been applied to seabirds, possibly because the requisite data are quite difficult to obtain. Because of its unparalleled long-term data sets on Farallon marine birds — and through its developing association with the seabird monitoring program at Channel Islands — PRBO is a logical pioneer in this area.

There is insufficient data on either the Xantus' Murrelet or Ashy Storm-Petrel to trigger listing under the Endangered Species Act, but after assembling and evaluating all the available data, PRBO produced population viability analyses that reveal the need for additional protection and indicate the kinds of intervention needed.

The Xantus' Murrelet is a small alcid related to the Common Murre and Rhinoceros Anklet that nests colonially in rock crevices and under vegetation.

Each pair attempts to raise two chicks per season, foraging for food at sea by day and entering and leaving their nest sites by night. The species breeds south to Baja California. Santa Barbara Island is one of its northernmost outposts and home to 95% of the US population. On

Santa Barbara Island, the Xantus' breeding population today is comprised of only 1400 birds, down from an estimated 2000-3000 in 1977.

Poor reproductive success appears to be the primary cause of the colony's decline, with less than one chick per pair — too few to sustain stable numbers. The murrelets are adapted to some native island predators, but they are highly susceptible to nest predation by introduced deer mice. The mice enter murrelet burrows and eat the eggs. The PVA demonstrated that, without intervention, this population has a probability of reaching "quasi-extinction" (500 breeding birds) within 20 years. Even a moderate reduction in mouse predation could stabilize the population.

The Ashy Storm-petrel has certain things in common with the Xantus' Murrelet. A relative of the larger "tubenose" marine birds such as shearwaters, the Ashy also is nocturnal and nests within crevices for protection from predators. Each pair invests its yearly reproductive effort in raising and fledging a single chick. The Farallon colony is at the northern extremity for this species, whose very limited breeding range extends south to islands off of southern California.

In the Ashy's case, the Farallon islands are the *world* population center, with an estimated 50-70% of *all* Ashy Storm-petrels on these breeding grounds. This makes the Ashy's decline on Southeast Farallon particularly troubling: the population has dropped from an estimated 3500-4000 birds in 1972 to 2000-2400 in 1992. The PVA demonstrates that Ashy's will continue to decline at a rate of almost 3% per year. Western Gulls, usually thought of as scavengers or as predators on chicks, are, in this case, major predators on adult birds. The Western Gull population on the Farallones has increased dramatically following the increase in human development in California over the past century.

For the Xantus' Murrelet, PRBO is investigating methods to enhance reproductive success on Santa Barbara island, lower the rate of mouse predation and develop ways to enhance nesting habitat.

For the Ashy Storm-petrel, PRBO is conducting genetic analyses, testing for population distinction between Farallon

breeding birds and colonies on the Channel Islands and plans to investigate means of controlling gull predation on Southeast Farallon.

For both species PRBO is seeking to develop conservation agreements with federal agencies to generate funds for conservation research without undergoing the time-consuming listing under the Endangered Species Act. The PVAs that the Marine Research Program has produced for the Ashy Storm-petrel and Xantus' Murrelet provide scientific guidelines for practical efforts to protect two populations of rare seabirds in California.

Central Coast Birding Trail

In 1995, seven Audubon chapters from Monterey to just north of Los Angeles banded together in a coastal council.

This year this council is publishing its first tangible collaboration — the Central Coast Birding Trail.

Four brochures — one for each county — describe the route and highlights of the Trail. Each brochure lists directions, habitat and species descriptions and seasonal notes.

You can get the brochures by phoning Audubon California at (916)481-5332 and asking for "birding trail information". They can also be reached by writing to 555 Audubon Place, Sacramento, CA 95825 or by faxing (916) 481-6228.

Hazel Wolf

Hazel Wolf, a member of Seattle Audubon, will be honored with the *National Audubon Medal for Excellence in Environmental Achievement* this year in December at the NAS Board meeting in San Francisco. Over her 99 years, Ms. Ward has won many environmental awards, including at least one honorary doctorate, and has founded more than 20 Audubon chapters!

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or seaside stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall.

Thomas Henry Huxley
Sequoia Audubon Society

El Niño Returns — With a Vengeance?

It is now clear that el Niño is back among us. Albacore tuna are being caught routinely off the coast and blue whales have wandered well north of their normal range through the spring and summer.

You may recall that past el Niño outbreaks caused terrific coastal storms that washed away beach and oceanside yards and dwellings; brought boobies to Pacifica and Point Lobos, a Swallow-tailed Gull to Monterey harbor; caused failure of alcid and tubenose colonies on the Farallones and brought thousands of seabirds to the brink of starvation.

These outbreaks have also been blamed for such worldwide phenomena as the California drought, desertification and starvation in the horn of Africa, floods and typhoons in Bangladesh, jellyfish invasions in Australia, severe winters in Europe and crashes in fish populations in South America. Some meteorologists are claiming this el Niño is creating the greatest sea change since the phenomenon was first noted in the nineteenth century.

As the Chinese curse goes, "May you live in interesting times."

How To Identify

...The San Francisco Garter Snake
...The California Red-Legged Frog

These two species, listed 30 years apart under the Endangered Species Act, were linked long before the Act came into being. The San Francisco garter snake's principal food is the young red-legged frog.

This snake is one of the easiest to identify — there's no looking for obscure fieldmarks on this little reptile. It has a bright turquoise belly, a red head and a red stripe along each side. The only thing remotely close to it is the red-sided garter snake which has blotchy red sides but a dark head and a white or creamy belly.

The frog is a touch more difficult to identify. Scientists tell us that it is readily identified by two lateral folds on its back. (*Is a lateral fold anything like a bad quarterback option?* —Ed.) They then

tell you that it has red feet and usually — but not always — has a pink or reddish color on the inside of the legs. The principal threat to the frog's existence is loss of habitat. In the isolated ponds and marshes that are left, introduced species of bullfrog are a major problem. Bullfrogs find the red-legged quite tasty and are capable of wiping out whole populations.

Environmental Firm to Assess Marine Reserve Problems

Following a 1992 marine biology survey that showed that humans severely impacted the marine life and the intertidal and sub-tidal fishery for eels and abalone of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, San Mateo County Parks recently announced the selection of Brady/LSA, a Berkeley environmental consulting firm, to develop a plan to protect the ecosystem and maximize educational and recreational opportunities at the Reserve. The survey will include Pillar Point Marsh.

The survey will address the facilities and staffing of the Reserve as well as habitat issues. According to Naturalist Bob Breen, weekend and summer levels of visitors exceed the parking facilities, the tiny visitors' center is crowded, restrooms are inadequate and resource protection exceeds the capacity of the staff.

Completion of the project is expected to take 8-10 months. The bulk of the funding is to come from the county, but grants of \$20,000 from the Coastal Conservancy and \$3,000 from Genentech Corp. through the Friends of the Reserve have been received for this purpose.

The final approval of recommendations will come from the Board of Supervisors.

SFBBO Classes & Field Trips

Migrating Raptors Class

On October 14, Allen Fish, Director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, is conducting a class to help you understand raptor identification, behavior,

migration ecology and conservation.

He will follow this up by leading the class on a trip to Hawk Hill on the Marin Headlands during the height of fall migration.

Class meeting: Tuesdays, October 14 and 21; 7:30 - 9:30 PM. Field trip: Saturday, October 25; 10 am - 2 PM (bring a lunch)

Fee: Member \$40 Nonmember \$55

Field Trips

North Coast: October 17-19

Tule Lake: November 7-9

Carrizo Plain: February 15-17

All trips led by Tom Ryan and Gjon Hazard. A \$35 donation is requested from each member and \$50 from each non-member for each field trip.

Contact the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory to sign up or for more details on any event.

Coleman Appointed Head of NWRS

Rick Coleman, former Project manager for the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (1986-93) has been appointed to head up the entire National Wildlife Refuge system.

Dr. Coleman hopes to increase public awareness and participation in the refuges and cites his experiences with the Citizens' Committee to Complete the Refuge as epitomizing "what can be done working with partners who can really help our refuge system."

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Did you know that the city of San Francisco is probably the only municipality in the world with an Official Migratory Bird? Former Mayor Jordan had chosen the Olive-sided Flycatcher to fill the post. Now, how about the Rustic Bunting as Half Moon Bay's Official Vagrant? Or the European Starling as San Mateo County's Official Alien? Or the Hare-brained Politico as our Official Disaster?

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.

David Kroencke in memory of Frank K. Beyer

Ora Lee Marble in memory of Linda Zukoski

Sequoia *NEEDLES* is published monthly except in January, July and August. Members are encouraged to submit material to be published in the *NEEDLES*. The deadline for the submission of materials is the first day of the month preceding publication. These may be original articles, original artwork or cartoons, or uncopyrighted material from other sources. Items dealing with conservation issues must be submitted to the Conservation Committee prior to publication. Information for all officers and chairpersons should be mailed to 30 West 39th Ave., Suite 202, San Mateo, CA 94403-4561. Please send **RENEWAL MEMBERSHIPS** directly to National Audubon in the envelope accompanying your renewal notice.

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

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