

sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society

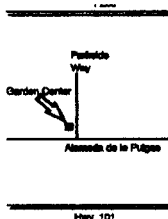
San Mateo County Volume 49, No. 2
October, 1998

This Month's Program



Cliff Richer, noted non-expert, will lead the group in a discussion on the **Identification of Raptors Overhead**. Audience participation will be encouraged to comment on the projected images of soaring

hawks and the attendee's favorite hawk identification shortcuts will be solicited. Meetings are the second Thursday of the month at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside at 7:30 PM.



Next Month's Program

Julie Thayer of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory will present a program on the Breeding Birds of Año Nuevo Island, concentrating on the Rhinoceros Auklets, and featuring Western Gulls, Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots and Black Oystercatchers. Some other surprises may also be possible.

Audubon Adventures



The Audubon Adventures program is off to a good start with 21 classrooms signed up so far. This innovative program assists teachers in environmental education. We are looking to enlist more classrooms.

Robin Smith, who has stepped down as our Education Chair, is continuing to head up this program until her successor is named. If you have a child or grandchild whose class you'd like to sponsor or if you would like to participate as a sponsor for the overall program, please call Robin (325-3306) for more details.

From the Editor

Cliff Richer

If you will look above at the masthead of this newsletter you will notice that this is Number 2 of Volume 49.

Still don't get it?

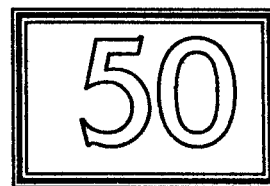
Well neither did I the first time I typed Volume 49. It was only later that the significance of that number sank in.

Think about it. 1999 is not only the last year of the twentieth century, it is Sequoia Audubon's 50th Anniversary! Yes, it was in 1949 that a maverick group broke off from Santa Clara Valley Audubon to form Sequoia.

What are we going to do about it? I don't have the slightest idea. I don't even have a good sense of Sequoia's history prior to 1981. I know some of the legendary names like Monty Montgomery, and even know some of the legendary people like Frank and Jean Allen, Ed McElhaney and my personal, more recent, nominees for living legends -- Rick Baird, Mary Bresler, Linda Davies, Janet Duerr and Steve Schafer and, most recently, Anne Moser.

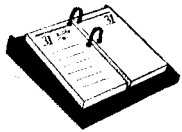
Sequoia Audubon has been a major part of my life for nearly twenty years and somehow I feel that we should not let its first half-century go by unnoticed.

What do you think?



Looking forward to.....?

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.

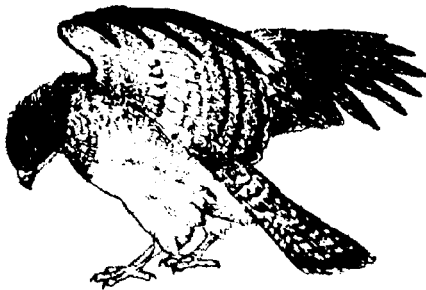


The S A S Calendar

October

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1 — BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING at the Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members are welcome to attend.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, GENERAL MEETING — Cliff Richer will lead a general discussion on the **Identification of Hawks Overhead** at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. Get together at 6:30 PM with the meeting starting at 7:00.



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10 - FIELD TRIP TO HAWK HILL (MARIN HEADLANDS - POINT DIABLO) This is a traditional time and place to watch hawks soar and wheel as they gather their courage to cross the Golden Gate. Accipiters outnumber all other species combined so this trip should give everyone 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 TOP of Hawk Hill at **9:30 AM**. 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. Park at the point where Conzelman Road becomes one-way and proceed a short distance up to the top of the hill.

LEADER

LESLIE FLINT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22 — SAN PEDRO VALLEY COUNTY PARK FIELD TRIP. This wooded park provides a variety of habitat for migrating and wintering species of forest and grassland birds. The trip will entail some walking along easy trails. The trip will begin at **9:00 AM** at the Visitors' Center of the park. To get there take Highway 1 to Pacifica and, turn inland at Linda Mar Boulevard. Follow Linda Mar to its end, turn left and follow the sign into the park.

LEADER

JUDI SPITLER



News from Audubon Canyon Ranch

Betsy Stafford

Bouquets of summer wildflowers to our good friends from Sequoia Audubon. You helped host over 8000 visitors to the Ranch this past nesting season. We couldn't have done it without you and we hope you were able to join us for our Volunteer Appreciation Picnic on Saturday, September 19.

The quiet that descended upon our Bolinas Lagoon Preserve as the chicks fledged was broken on September 9th, when docent training began. This remarkable program runs for 23 Wednesdays and features speakers and field trips on subjects as diverse as birds and pond life, biotic communities, flowering and non-flowering plants, native American history and teaching techniques for 4th and 5th graders. If you'd like to learn in depth about our local natural history and share your love of nature with schoolchildren, please call our ACR office for more information. It may not be too late to get you in this fall's class.

Fall is also a special time to take stock of what happened in the heronry this past spring, and we invite you to join us for our annual, ever-popular seminar, "Under the Heronry" on Saturday, October 31 — come for coffee at 9:30, then a talk and walk with Ray Peterson, our Bolinas Preserve biologist. No charge, but please reserve with the office at 415-868-9244.

Ray is organizing a Saturday of Research and Resource Management on October 17. Contact him at 415-868-9244 to volunteer for studies and stewardship of natural resources. Ray provides inspiration, drinks, and a taste-bud-zapper.

Our Work Parties are fun, and we provide the food! Come help us spruce up our Preserves by working on the trails or in the gardens, libraries, or kitchens: At Bolinas Lagoon Preserve, join us on Saturday Nov. 7. Call 415-868-9244 to register. At Bouverie Preserve, join us on Saturday, Oct. 3. Call 707-938-4554 to register.

We also invite you to join us on one of the following dozen Guided Nature Walks through our beautiful 500 acre Bouverie Preserve in Sonoma's Valley of the Moon: Sept. 19, Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Jan. 23, Mar. 6, Mar. 20, Apr. 3, Apr. 17, May 1, and May 8. These walks are so popular that we are assigning reservations by lottery. Call 707-938-4554 for a lottery form. No charge. Donations are appreciated.

Bouverie Preserve will host the popular seminar, "The Way They Lived". Learn about the original people of Sonoma County on a walk through Bouverie Preserve. Don't delay — reserve with the office 707-868-9244 — cost is \$30.

John Kelly, biologist at our Cypress Grove Preserve, reports that the Shorebird Monitoring Program is beginning its 10th year at Tomales Bay. He is recruiting experienced shorebird observers, with telescopes, to participate in this project. Call the Preserve at 415-663-8203.

John Maron of the University of Washington and Carla D'Antonio of UC Berkeley are also conducting research at Cypress Grove. They are studying how soil nitrogen enrichment and subsequent invasion of introduced grasses alters nitrogen retention in coastal prairie soils. They expect to develop important insights for restoration of coastal grasses.

Congratulations to *Bird Watcher's Digest*

Birdwatcher's Digest is celebrating its 20th year of publication this year. *BWD* was the first independent magazine to be devoted exclusively to the watching and feeding of wild birds and has maintained its excellence through that period. Thanks and Congratulations!

Commemorating the event the September/October issue of the magazine featured several lists of 20. Here are two of them (along with the usual editorial comments in *italics*.)

The Twenty Most Important Changes in Birding in the Past Twenty Years

20. Extinction of Bachman's Warbler, Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Eskimo Curlew. *Extirpated from the US, a small population of Ivory-bills has been documented from Cuba and rumors persist about the "discovered" nesting grounds of the last few Eskimo Curlews.*
19. The increase in National Wildlife Refuges.
18. The decline in grassland birds. We are approaching crisis for half a dozen species.
17. The increase in pelagic trips. *A good deal of credit has to go to local legend Debbie Shearwater.*
16. Growth of the American Birding Association. *Most remarkable was its phoenix-like rise from the ashes left by its former administrators. Erik Blom, the author of this list, deserves more than a little credit for the resurrection.*
15. Saving the Bald Eagle, Whooping Crane, California Condor and Kirtland's Warbler.
14. Specialty birding guides for hawks, shorebirds, etc.
13. The improvement in birding optics.
12. The increase in birding hotlines and rare bird alerts.
11. The growth of the North American Migration Count which is challenging the Christmas Count as the largest volunteer bird-watching effort. *Not much of a big deal out here...at least not yet.*
10. The growing recognition of bird watching as culturally important by the media.
9. The near collapse of the National Audubon Society and its resurrection by returning to its roots. *Hell, all we had to do was fire Berle.*
8. Breeding Bird Atlas Projects. *Our own San Mateo County Atlas is nearing completion.*
7. The Internet
6. Bird-finding Guides. Now available for every state and probably soon for every county.
5. A growing awareness of the economic impact of birding.
4. Growth of bird feeding.
3. Field Guides. More than a dozen just for North America and more coming all the time.
2. Bird magazines. *I certainly wouldn't put this as number two in importance, but then again I don't publish or edit a bird magazine.*
1. The death of Roger Tory Peterson. *Amen.*

*From Erik A. T. Blom,
"Quick Takes", Birdwatcher's Digest,*

The Top 20 Bird Watching Controversies

20. Birder or Birdwatcher? *I thought this controversy was over years ago. My preference -- the Australian "birdo".*
19. To pish or not to pish? Not yet a big deal here, but the practice is frowned upon in Europe as being disruptive.
18. Is bird feeding bad for birds? Some ornithologists are questioning the impact of feeding on the health of birds.
17. Letting nature take its course. *Should you shoo the predator away? Feed the starving bird? My advice -- let your conscience be your guide. It won't make a bit of difference in the long run, but it may make you feel better.*
16. Is listing contrary to the spirit of birding? *Listing is fun, not-listing is Zen, just don't get fanatic about either.*
15. How close is too close? *All of us have sinned here. I once approached a Killdeer nest in order to observe the steps the mother bird took to defend her eggs. Get close enough to observe, but not close enough to disturb.*
14. Should we kill pest species? *A real ethical problem. I don't have any qualms about eradicating pests that are dangerous to endangered species or disruptive of the environment, but I can also recognize that the individual bird, animal or plant is blameless.*
13. Should birders obey "No Trespassing" signs? *Why is this even a controversy? Of course we should.*
12. Should you use tapes to lure birds into view? *There is a great deal of anecdotal and no scientific evidence on this point. I use them only to get owls and rails to call at night.*
11. Can you count a bird on your life list if you have only heard it? *Your list is your list. Make your own rules.*
10. Should cats be kept indoors? *A real hot potato. I pass.*
9. Lumps and splits. What is a species? *This is a scientific problems, not a birding controversy.*
8. Is collecting necessary? *Ethically, no. Scientifically, sometimes.*
7. Is banding bad for birds? Is it necessary? *Yes, and yes.*
6. Is the use of capsaicin or hot pepper an ethical way to deal with squirrels. Does it harm birds? *Does anyone do this?*
5. Should birders pay a tax on equipment as hunters do?
4. Should people have to pay to participate in a Christmas Count? *This may be a moot question now that the ABA is taking over the publication of Field Notes. Wait and see.*
3. Should Peregrine Falcons be re-introduced to the wild? *This is a question only because there have been some poorly planned re-introductions into unsuitable areas.*
2. What should we do about (urban) Canada Geese?
1. Are Big Days big fun or a big waste? *Yes, and yes.*

--- From Bill Thompson III, Editor of Birdwatcher's Digest

Not Very Royal

Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., the world's second-largest cruise line, was fined \$9 million last spring after pleading guilty to dumping oil at sea, lying to the Coast Guard and tampering with witnesses and evidence.

The cruise line admitted that it jettisoned waste oil into the ocean instead of sending it to holding tanks for future safe disposal. In some cases, the company admitted, oil was pumped out of ships through pipes that were removed by the crew just before Coast Guard inspections. The procedure saved the line tens of thousands of dollars and some officers received bonuses for cutting costs.

Five of the line's 12 ships engaged in the illegal activity even while stewards and deck hands wore "Save The Waves" buttons.

A "Gotcha!" Web Site

Know your neighborhood polluter! Type in your zip code in the Environmental Defense Fund's new Chemical Scorecard Web site (www.scorecard.org) and hit enter. When a map of local manufacturers appears, you can click on any one of them and find out what chemicals it emits, how it ranks and what health effects there are. The Web site lets you send faxes to the top-ranking polluters in your area, lists local environmental organizations and connects you to sources for pollution prevention information.

Not to be outdone, the Environmental Protection Agency unveiled a Web page (www.epa.gov/oeca/sfi) that provides comprehensive information on environmental performances of 653 facilities in five major industries. The site profiles petroleum refining, iron and steel production, primary nonferrous metal refining and smelting, pulp manufacturing and auto assembly plants and their compliance and inspection histories.

(From the July/August issue of Common Ground, the newsletter of the Conservation Fund.)

An End to Forest Road Subsidies?

Newt Gingrich is apparently ready to end the practice of giving credits to those carving roads into public lands. In

the past two years measures to cut the road budget have failed by just one vote, and the House Speaker apparently has seen the writing on the wall.

The subsidy allows the purchaser of a Forest Service timber sale to construct roads and deduct the expense from the cost of the sale at an estimated cost of \$126 million.

The Forest Service itself also cuts roads and admitted that it had lost \$88 million on the program last year.

The government already has at least 433,000 miles of forest highways, and a backlog of about \$500 million in deferred maintenance for the system.

The roads eat away at the wilderness, causing erosion and watershed damage linked to the steep decline of steelhead and salmon populations.

In the past several years, a significant number of Republicans have broken ranks and joined with Democrats to cut the Forest Service's road-building budget.

The *Seattle Times* said that while lawmakers finally have agreed on a plan to cut the subsidy "it will take bold strokes to topple the timber road rip-off once and for all."

Gingrich reportedly has told Republican congressmen that he will "sanction" renegades on this issue. (Translation: Loss of chairmanships and other important party posts for those who disobey.)

For more details, contact the American Lands Alliance at (202) 879-3188.

Good News/Bad News On The Population Front Good News

IRAN: Iran is successfully lowering its national fertility rate from 3.2% to 1.41% through programs such as a required family planning clinic before marriage, and free birth control and sterilization. Iran also holds an annual Population Week and recruits female volunteers to help spread the word about the benefits of population stabilization.

BRITAIN: The trend to later marriage continues.

US: Teenage birthrates in the U.S. are down by 21 percent from 1991 to 1996.

Reasons for the trend include a booming economy, fear of AIDS, and an increased use of contraceptives by teenagers.

JAPAN: Japan's population is expected to drop sharply after 2007 and level off at 75% of its present population by 2050. Many young people are not marrying or having children because their jobs are taking up too much time and/or they like the freedoms that come with being single.

Bad News

JAPAN: The Japanese are worried about who will pay for the present population's retirement benefits if their population drops as sharply as has been predicted. Worldwide, the global working population is likely to increase 45% in the next 25 years while population aged 65 plus is expected to increase 88%.

BRITAIN: The British have the world's highest rate of unmarried teen-age mothers. (*Take this one with a grain of salt. It was reported by a French news agency.*)

UGANDA: At a meeting of The Family Planning Association of Uganda participants reported that mistrust and lack of communication has frustrated the organization's activities in rural areas. In response to these accusations, a commission of inquiry was set up to investigate.

INDIA: Illegal child marriages are still occurring in many poorer communities in India. Child marriages contribute to high birth rates, poverty malnutrition, high illiteracy infant mortality and other social problems.

WORLD: In 1900, the world held 1.9 billion people. The Population Reference Bureau projects that global population will reach 6 billion by 2000. 90% of the young people reaching childbearing ages live within cultures where large families are favored.

US: The Questionmark Award: (*Given by your editor to the most dubious solution to a problem*). Some Washington state residents are advocating a means to stop population increases. They propose stopping growth by refusing to build new schools. (*Back when horses were common, there were sayings about "carts before horses" and "closing barn doors". Wouldn't those apply here?*)

They're Waiting for You!



Keep them well-fed this fall and winter.

FALL 1998 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

ALL ORDERS WITH PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation and education programs

Please check preferred pickup location. Pickup dates will be October 15-18, 1998 with details to be advised later.

☐ San Bruno

☐ Burlingame

☐ Half Moon Bay

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

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Mail your check and order to

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

30 West 39th Avenue, Suite 202

San Mateo, CA 94403

345-3724

Birding Classes

by Maryann Danielson

Two classes for birders are being offered by Sunbeam Ecology Explorations at Little House, 800 Middle Avenue in Menlo Park. Instructor: Maryann Danielson. Register at the first class meeting.

BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS —

a short course for beginning and less skilled Intermediate birders. Resident birds and migrants that move through our area will be highlighted in this class series. Bird identification techniques will be stressed along with pertinent life history of the birds. Five slide lectures and three field trips. Tuesday mornings, 9-11 AM., (Began September 15) Fee: \$55.

FALL BIRD IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOPS — for intermediate and more advanced birders. Each workshop will have an evening study meeting followed by a field trip and is designed to simplify the identification of fall plumaged birds. The workshops will focus on:

- Shorebirds, Confusing fall warblers and other immature plumaged birds,
- Raptors
- Waterfowl, especially female ducks and those species with look-alike patterns.

The workshops lectures are on Monday evenings, 7-9 PM. (Began August 31). Fee: \$70 for four workshops with an additional fee required for the last weekend trip.

Plans are also underway for a beginners' class to be held at or with the sponsorship of the Wild Bird Center in San Carlos.

Bluebirds Buffeted by el Niño

Bluebird monitors all over the state reported that these thrushes suffered heavy losses in the late spring El Niño storms. The losses ranged from dead birds and chicks to abandoned nests — even some with chicks. All of the dead birds seemed to be well-fed and were judged to have died from exposure.

On the other hand, other species using bluebird boxes seemed unaffected and Wood Ducks appeared to prosper.

Many of the adult survivors began a

second brood, even building new nests over the old ones in some cases. (This is normal for Eastern Bluebirds, who often begin nesting while there is still snow on the ground and always rely on a second nesting to assure survival of the species.)

Some bluebird monitors were forced to relocate boxes because wind had blown them down, because wind-driven rain was soaking the nests or because they were being attacked by predators. To their pleasant surprise they found that after an initial period of disorientation, the adult birds found the new locations and resumed caring for their eggs and chicks.

One monitor, Hatch Graham, bands his bluebirds — adults and chicks — and discovered one of his brooding females already banded. A check showed that he had banded her as a chick last year on another nest 5½ miles away.

Border Collies Learning a New Trade

Border collies, long renowned for their sheep herding skills, are being recruited to cope with the problems of urban geese and coots.

The navy is using one to keep geese off the runways at Willow Grove Naval Air Station in Pennsylvania. The dog has reduced bird-aircraft collisions to zero.

In Las Vegas, Kate, a border collie, keeps herself in shape chasing coots and geese on a golf course, trying to herd them as if they were sheep. Reportedly, geese have left the course entirely and the number of coots is down about 75%.

Bird Epidemic Halted

Last winter's avian salmonellosis epidemic apparently has subsided. Starting in January, the bacterial disease killed songbirds throughout the East and Midwest. No one knows how many birds died, but scientists called the outbreak a pandemic, particularly among Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches and Common Redpolls.

The good news is that bacterial levels are now back to normal levels among birds. The bad news is that the disease has spread to some domestic cats and to some cat owners.

"The salmonellosis problem in migratory songbirds occurred once before in recent record, in the spring of 1988," said Cornell's Patrick McDonough. "It is likely to occur again, what with the ever-present stresses on wildlife from climate conditions and from man."

Two thousand strains of salmonellae are known and the diseases they cause will probably never be eradicated.

Many of the affected birds in recent months were discovered at or near bird feeders where the disease was spread by infected fecal matter. El Niño can also take a share of the blame as salmonella thrives in the warm, wet conditions that were prevalent through much of the affected area last winter.

Avian diseases in general can be prevented at feeders by cleaning them with a 10% bleach solution whenever droppings or seed accumulate and by removing spilled and soiled seed.

Vets and medical doctors advise against trying to treat sick birds at home. Birds inappropriately treated can become carriers of the disease and you or members of your family can contract some strains of salmonella.

If you must handle sick or dead birds, do so with care. Try not to touch them directly and wash your hands thoroughly afterward.

Sandhill Crane Festival

Lodi, CA, October 9-11

A number of organizations, including the San Joaquin Audubon Society, are sponsoring the Second Annual Sandhill Crane Festival at Lodi High School.



The Festival will feature children's art, Taiko drumming, theatrical events, a concert by the Banana Slug String Band, a Japanese Crane Dance, puppet shows and field trips to the Nature Conservancy's Cosumnes River Preserve, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Woodridge State Reserve, Lodi Lake and many other private areas.

Admission is \$6 per day or \$9 for the entire weekend. For more specific details call 1-209-368-6444.

Population Changes — Crows and Ravens

Charles Coston, writing in *The Stilt*, newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, noted the increase in the numbers of American Crows and Common Ravens in the immediate Bay Area, using data from the Crystal Springs, Palo Alto, San Jose and Oakland Christmas Counts from 1960 through 1997.

Our Crystal Springs count showed the sharpest increase in crow populations and the second largest in raven numbers. This is no great surprise to any of us who have been out in the field with any regularity. What is a surprise is that both of these species occupy very similar niches in the environment and an increase in one species is usually accompanied by a decrease in the other. Not so in this case as both species appear to be prospering.

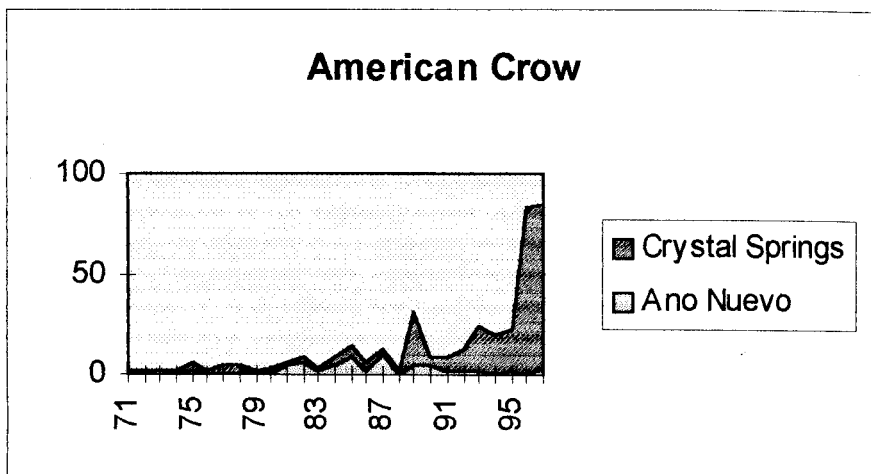
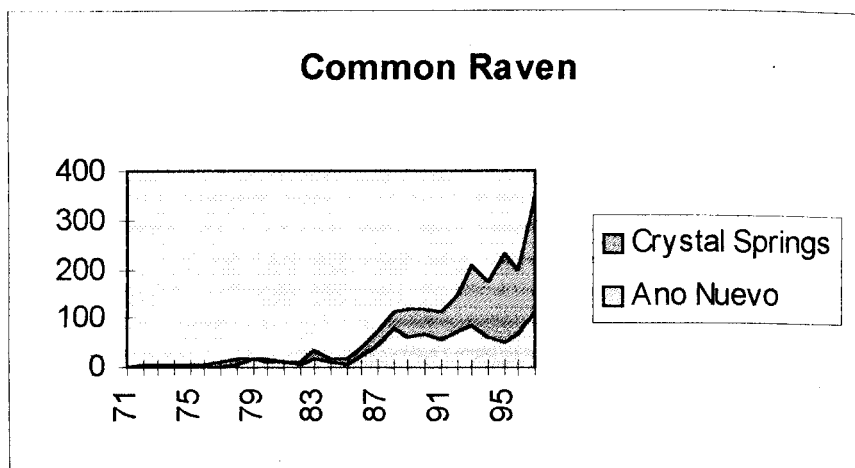
In the case of San Mateo County it appears that the population increases are centered in the more urban areas. The Crystal Springs count shows remarkable increases in numbers from 1971 through 1997 while the Año Nuevo count shows a significant but much smaller expansion. (See graphs).

Why this should be so is a mystery. Garbage dumps, a favorite foraging ground for both corvids, have been replaced by sanitary land fills and dump-

sters containing edible garbage are usually covered. If the large corvids have become more efficient predators then the rural populations should have shown the

largest increase.

Does anyone have a theory?



Gifts and Bequests

**Ruby V. & Raymond Chow, Comerica Bank - California, Marsha H. Rising, Stevens Engineering,
Julia F. & Tony S. Van, Mr. & Mrs. James Wan, Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Wan, Mabel N. Yu**
in memory of
Nancy Jean Chow

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.

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY'S WEB PAGE'S URL is /http://www.belmont.gov/orgs/sas/

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RARE BIRD ALERT

(415) 681-7422

We Invite your membership in the National Audubon Society & SAS. To join, please complete and mail this form with payment to SAS, 30 West 39th Ave., #202, San Mateo, CA 94403

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New \$20 (1 year) Student/Seniors \$15

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Make checks payable to National Audubon Society.

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☐ **Donation:** SAS appreciates your tax-deductible donation which helps fund the chapter's education, conservation and ongoing activities.

For membership renewal information call National Audubon Society at (800) 274-4201

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