

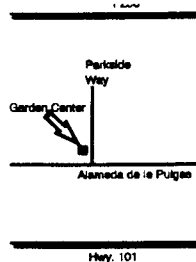
sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 49, No. 7
April, 1999

This Month's Program

Al JARAMILLO, Coyote Creek Riparian Station's resident ornithologist, an SAS director and a professional tour leader, will give us an introduction to BIRD BANDING and show slides of some of the birds captured at Coyote Creek Riparian Station (CCRS). He will also point out how the ten year results of banding at the Station can lead to a determination of how bird populations increase or decrease."

Saturday, April 10, following his program, Al will lead a field trip to CCRS to tour the facilities and demonstrate bird banding.



Next Month's Program

The May 13th General Meeting and program will be held at Half Moon Bay State Beach, 95 Kelley Avenue in Half Moon Bay and will feature Heidi Horvitz, State Parks Ranger, who will outline the **Snowy Plover Project** for us.

This will represent two new departures from our usual meeting format. This will be a campfire meeting (indoor facilities are available in case of bad weather) and it will be at a coastside location. We plan to have at least one coastside meeting next year as well and possibly one or two more in other county locations — for example, Junipero Serra and San Pedro Valley County Parks could host meetings next year.

Other Possible Changes

The Board of Directors discussed two possible changes for the next Audubon year.

The first of these was a change in meeting night from the second Thursday of the month to either the first or second Friday.

The second was to reduce the number of newsletters from the current number (9) to six, published every other month. This move is an economic move dictated by the increased costs of mailing and printing.

Your opinion is wanted! Please let us know what you think on either of these proposals — or suggest an alternative. **Write or phone the office or any director to pass on your thoughts.**

San Mateo County Big Day Report

April 1, 2050

Francis Toldi

Author's Note: David Fix, a former American Birds/Audubon Field Notes Regional Editor, wrote an incredibly witty, thought-provoking and entirely fictitious Middle Pacific Coast Region Report to Field Notes for the June-July 2037 period. Those of you with web access can find a copy of it on Joe Morlan's marvelous California Birding Pages, at <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorian/>.

Inspired by Mr. Fix's example, and with a little help from Bert McKee, I have created my own fictitious account, this one of a County Big Day (as psychically told by my daughter) in April, 2050. -FT)

This is a report on our Big Day for 2050. As always, we kept within the boundaries of San Mateo County. It is amazing how little the basic route has changed over the years. As always, we start out on the outer coast before dawn,



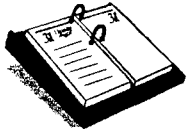
listening for owls and rails, then work our way up the coast scanning for seabirds and the dwellers of the rocky and sandy shoreline. We make our way over to the San Francisco Bay via the dry interior, work our way along the various points along the Bay-shore, and then, if there is time, back out to the coast for the final minutes of light.

**You'll find the President's Message on Page Two
(Honestly — after all would we kid you?)**

We met at 4:00 AM in Half Moon City, where we had little trouble kicking up a Barn Owl, then raced down to Pescadero Marsh for rails. Luckily, the San Gregorio Checkpoint wasn't open yet, so we picked up a good hour on our schedule. We definitely needed it, though, because we had a devil of a time convincing the Pescadero Patrol Officer that our permits covered standing by the marsh making weird noises and clapping. Still, with a bit of coaxing Sora and Virginia Rails called out, and off we went to the Butano/Gazos area for night birds. We had fairly good luck on the owls, picking up the easy ones — Barred and Great Horned Owls. The other species sometimes seen in this area are always tough, and this year was no exception.

(Continued on Page 7)

The mission of Sequoia Audubon Society is to participate 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

April

THURSDAY, APRIL 1 — BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING (NO FOOLING) at the Audubon Office at 7:30 PM. All members are welcome to attend.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8 — GENERAL MEETING — Al Jaramillo, Coyote Creek Riparian Station's (CCRS) resident ornithologist, will give us an introduction to BIRD BANDING and show slides of some of the birds captured at the Station. He will also point out how ten years of banding at the Station have led to certain conclusions about how bird populations increase or decrease. The meeting begins at 7:30 with an informal get-together followed by the meeting and program at 8 PM at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside. See Page One for more details.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14 — COYOTE CREEK RIPARIAN STATION BIRD BANDING DEMONSTRATION. Al will follow up his program with a demonstration and tour of the actual banding operation at CCRS. We will also bird the riparian areas and waterbird ponds. Access to this area is limited and reservations are required. To make your reservations call Al or Field Trip Chairwoman Merry Haveman (344-2146). To reach CCRS, take Hwy. 237 east from Sunnyvale and exit north on McCarthy Blvd. Go one block on McCarthy and make a left on Ranch Road. Just before the freeway entrance, make a right on the Alviso-Milpitas Road, cross over the small bridge, and make a sharp right onto the levee. Follow the levee about a mile to the banding station trailers where we will meet at 8 AM.

LEADER AL JAMARILLO 712-1272

SUNDAY, APRIL 11 — BAYFRONT PARK — This half-day trip is good for beginners. It is one of the few places in the county where Blue-winged Teal may be seen. To get there take Hwy. 1 to Menlo Park and exit north on Marsh Road. Follow Marsh Road to its end at the park entrance, where we will meet at 9 AM.

LEADER ROBIN SMITH 325-3306

SUNDAY, APRIL 18 — MINES ROAD — Relict populations of birds linger on in these isolated valleys despite the destruction of their habitats in the Central and Livermore Valleys. Phainopepla, Lewis' Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinch, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Roadrunner and Wild Turkey are usually seen and we have assembled lists of 75 to 100 species in a day. 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 so bring lunch and liquids. Weather is unpredictable, with temperatures in the past varying between 40 and 90 degrees on this trip. There are only two reliable restroom facilities, at lunch time and at mid-afternoon; and one unreliable service station at the half-way point so be prepared. To get there, follow I-580 about 25 miles to the Vasco Road exit. Follow Vasco Road to its end, turn right on Tesla Road. In about a mile you will come to Mines Road. We will meet at that intersection at 8 AM. Late arrivals will have no problem in catching up with the group if they follow Mines Road until they encounter the parked cars.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28 -- SAN PEDRO VALLEY COUNTY PARK -- This park provides a variety of habitat for migrating and resident species of forest and grassland birds. The trip will entail some walking along easy trails. The trip will begin 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, look right and follow the signs to the park. The \$4 entrance will be waived for those having a note on their dashboard indicating they are on the Audubon field trip.

LEADER JUDI SPITLER 355-9362



From the President Francis Toldi



Four times a year the eight San Francisco Bay Area Audubon chapters meet to discuss regional issues and hear about each others' current projects and experiences. At the most recent meeting we mutually launched an exciting new project: to make preservation and restoration of wetlands and adjacent wild areas in the San Francisco Bay and Estuary an Audubon National Campaign. This would mean a marshaling of local chapter and National resources on the level of what is currently done at the Everglades. Expect to hear more in the *Needles* as we further develop this idea.

You all know that we have been active in the efforts to save Bair Island. Now that the acquisition of that vital wildlife area is nearing completion the various organizations that have been involved in this effort are meeting to set the goals and begin planning for its restoration and management. Sequoia will continue to play a key role in this process. We also will be involved in efforts to educate the public on this critical wetland habitat by offering regular field trips to the region and assisting in the creation of informational displays.

Restoration of our Bay wetland areas is not our only priority. The coastsides wetland and riparian areas are also under massive attack from developers. This item is followed by an announcement from the San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center seeking Stream Monitoring Volunteers. I urge you to consider getting involved in that worthy effort. We are fortunate that in our area there are a number of fine organizations doing their part in the fight for preservation and restoration of our precious wild areas. Only by cooperating with one another can we hope to prevail.

Stream Monitoring

Volunteers Needed

The San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center is recruiting volunteers for this year's stream monitoring program. There will be a kickoff meeting Wednesday, April 21, at 7 PM in the San Gregorio General Store, Stage Road at Hwy. 84, in San Gregorio (1 mile east of Hwy. 1). If you cannot make the meeting, but are interested in helping with stream monitoring, please call Chris Larson at the SGERC at 726-2499.

More Volunteer Opportunities

Calling All North County Members!

Our **Conservation Committee** can use some new members. We are in particular need of members from the Northern portion of San Mateo County -- Daly City, South San Francisco, San Bruno and Millbrae. Of course, we welcome anyone with an interest in conservation matters from any part of the county to attend committee meetings and become involved in committee projects. Please call the SAS office (345-3724) and leave a message if you are interested in joining up or knowing more about the Conservation Committee.

Hawk-Eyes Needed



The **Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO)** is looking for a few good people to count and track the Pacific States' largest bird of prey migration.

The migration of tens of thousands of hawks, falcons, and eagles passes over the Marin Headlands each fall. Since 1983, the GGRO has trained volunteers to study birds using various methods.

More than 270 GGRO volunteers from all over the greater Bay Area tracked and monitored the 1998 migration of nineteen different raptor species. New volunteers are now being sought for the 1999 training class. Volunteers must be 18 years of age, and able to commit to one regular day every two weeks from August through December 1999, along with some weekend and evening trainings in July.

The GGRO's 1999 Informational Meetings are open to the public. Come on Tuesday, April 27, or Thursday, April 29, from 7 to 9:30 pm, or come on Saturday, May 1, from 10 am to 12:30 pm, to see if you want to get involved. All meetings will be held at Golden Gate National Recreation Area headquarters, Building 201 at Upper Fort Mason, in San Francisco. (Enter the fort at Franklin and Bay.)

For more information, call (415) 331-0730 or e-mail at ggro@ggnpa.org

Novel May Meeting

The May 13 General Meeting will be held at *Half Moon Bay State Beach*, 95 Kelley Avenue, Half Moon Bay. The program, "**Snowy Plover Project**", will be presented by Heidi Horvitz, a state parks ranger.



Directions from San Mateo: Go West on Highway 92 and turn left (south) on Highway One. Turn right on Kelley Avenue and follow it to its end. (Call any board member for carpool information)

A park aide at the entrance station will direct you to the campfire center. In the event of inclement weather, the meeting will be held in the headquarters building.

The meeting begins at 7:30 pm with an informal get-together with hot chocolate and cookies. We will be taking a short walk to view the nests before sunset.

The meeting begins at 8:00 pm, followed by the presentation around the campfire. In addition to discussing the protection of the snowy plover, Heidi will discuss recognition, habitat, food and habits of this endangered bird.

Mono Lake Seminars

The Mono Lake Committee is offering the following birding seminars for this year.

California Gull Research:

Nest Count

Dave Shuford,

Point Reyes Bird Observatory,
May 22-26

\$120 per Person per Day;

Overnight & Meals Included

Your participation and seminar fee will allow 16 years of research to continue on Mono's islands and provide you with a desert island adventure you will not soon forget. You'll enjoy the rare adventure of

visiting Mono's spectacular Negit Islets (and camping on the mysterious Krakatoa Islet) and observing the second largest California Gull rookery in North America.

Birds of the East Slope

David Lukas, June 12-13

\$90 per person,

\$75 for Mono Lake Committee members

In spring, the east slope of the Sierra Nevada becomes home to a fascinating mix of birds. Desert birds, waterbirds, and forest birds are all present. Over the course of two days, this field seminar will focus on local breeding birds in a wide range of habitats. Learn the finer points of identifying these species by sight and song. David Lukas has led programs for the Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and other groups. His book *Watchable Birds of the Great Basin* will be released in May, 1999.

California Gull Research:

Chick Banding

Dave Shuford,

Point Reyes Bird Observatory,
May 22-26

\$120 per Person per Day;

Overnight & Meals Included

See description of the gull research seminar above.

Fall Bird Migration

Dave Shuford, August 21-22

\$90 per person, \$75 for MLC members

The east slope of the Sierra Nevada is a major migration route for birds traveling from northern nesting areas to warm southern habitats. As a result, early autumn is the time of year to see the greatest diversity of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterbirds in the Mono Basin and on Crowley Reservoir. Dave Shuford has been a staff biologist at Point Reyes Bird Observatory for twenty years. He has conducted numerous surveys and research projects in the Mono Basin and beyond, and is well acquainted with where to find birds in the Eastern Sierra.

Call 760-647-6595 for registration and information on these and other workshops. Ask for the seminar desk.

Low Class Thievery

Wintering Gadwalls in Alabama were observed to be stealing food from ... coots?

Biologist Craig LeSchack and Gary Hepp observed Gadwalls stealing water milfoil shoots from coots. According to their data, the thievery was conducted by young un-mated ducks and corresponded inversely to the availability of milfoil and other foods. So long as edible vegetation could be reached without diving, there was little thievery. But, in December almost half the Gadwalls laid in wait and let the coots gather the milfoil.

However, I would hope that our *California* Gadwalls have more pride than to let coots do their food gathering.

1999 Golden Trout Natural History Workshop

Located at the 10,000-foot level in the Cottonwood Lakes basin of the southern Sierra Nevada near Mount Whitney, Golden Trout Natural History Workshops provide a special educational adventure to individuals and families. These six-day workshops have been organized by a non-profit overseer since 1974 and provide professionally led tours of Sierra natural history. The Golden Trout Camp educational facility serves as each workshop's high altitude classroom base camp, and is one of only a few such facilities remaining inside federally designated Wilderness Areas. Workshops offer daily hikes within the Cottonwood Lakes basin and surrounding areas; evenings include exposure to the local history and talks by special guests. All meals and shelter are provided. Three 1999 sessions are offered: June 27 to July 3; July to July 10; July 11 to July 17, including a special photography session the second week. Enrollment is limited. This is California's most unique outdoor workshop! To receive a brochure, write to: Golden Trout Natural History Workshop, Inc., Attn: Cindi McKernan, 1498 Brookside Ave., #5165, Redlands, CA 92373 (909-798-3060) or see them on the world wide web; www.1startists.com/gtc/index.htm.

Harbor Seals Sensitive to Disturbance

Depending on the season, 250 to 450 seals haul out on land on a given day in the San Francisco Bay.

Disturbance is a tremendous threat to the seals' continued presence in the bay. Researchers have witnessed some incredible acts of disturbance, ranging from the malicious blasting of airhorns to the well-intentioned attempts to feed the seals by throwing frozen fish at them. flushing all the seals including nursing pups.

How can you co-exist with the Bay's harbor seals? Here are some guidelines:

- **MAINTAIN A SAFETY ZONE OF 650 FEET AROUND HAULED SEALS**

This is just over the length of two football fields set end to end. From this distance you'll need field glasses or a spotting scope to get good looks. But remember, the objective is to coexist with them, not join them. Causing the seals to flush in order to obtain the perfect photograph can have serious consequences.

- **MOVE AWAY IF THE SEALS BECOME ALERT TO YOUR PRESENCE**

Seals' sensitivity to disturbance is influenced by season, weather, the history of disturbance at a haulout site, and recent events in the area (you may be the fourth boat today to come a little too close to the haulout). Given these variables, you may force the seals to go on alert even if you are outside the safety zone. Seals show alert behavior by raising their heads, looking directly at you, rolling onto their stomachs and pushing up on their foreflippers.

Even one or two seals threatened by your presence and showing alert behavior can precipitate movement by the entire

herd. Seals haul out in herds in order to benefit from the surveillance of many and they will flush in response to other seals.

- **AVOID HAULOUT SITES ALONG SLOUGH CHANNELS.**

Slough channels are usually too narrow to allow you to pass by without flushing the seals. If you come upon a channel haulout site, turn around if you can and avoid that route in the future. If you have no alternative route, pull far to the opposite side of the slough, maintain speed, sit low in your boat and DO NOT make eye

contact with the seals. In the animal world, harmless creatures do not make eye contact — predators do.

Harbor seals are especially sensitive to canoes and kayaks. These small crafts flush seals as often as motorboats.

From a seal's perspective, a human is coming toward them, waving its arms and carrying a big stick.

- **KEEP BALLOONS, PLASTIC BAGS, FISHING LINES, AND NETS OUT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

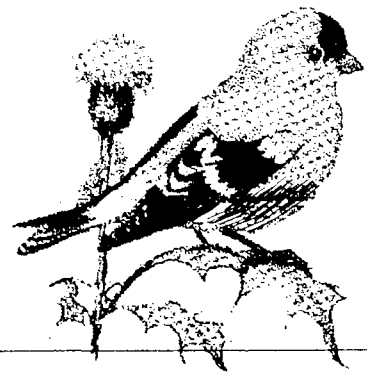
Balloons skittering across the waters look threatening and mylar balloons can get their ribbons tangled in the marsh plants bordering a haulout, posing an unknown threat to any seals within sight of it. Plastic grocery bags can blow across the water like a strange sea monster. Fishing lines and other trash cause serious harm to harbor seals. They can become entangled while swimming or ingest foreign objects that look like jellyfish to them.

We must provide harbor seals with undisturbed haulout sites. If the harbor seals flourish, so will other species native to the bay. While, we cannot return to the historical ecosystem that existed before European development, our actions can ensure the protection and gradual restoration of the remaining harbor seal habitat that survives in the industrial landscape.

Adapted from an article in the Spring 1999 issue of Tideline, newsletter of the SF Bay NWR, by Dianne Kopec, director of the San Francisco Bay Seal

Sequoia Audubon Society





SPRING 1999 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

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

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation and education programs

Please check preferred pickup location. Pickup dates will be April 15-18, 1999 with details to be advised later.

☐ San Bruno

☐ Burlingame

☐ Half Moon Bay

☐ Pacifica

☐ San Mateo

☐ Atherton

☐ San Carlos

				# BAGS	\$-COST-\$
AUDUBON WILD BIRD MIX.....	20 lb@	\$10.00 /bag			=
red & white millet plus black oil sunflower					
RED/WHITE MILLET MIX.....	20 lb@	\$ 9.00 /bag			=
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER	25 lb@	\$12.00 /bag			=
WHITE PROSO MILLET.....	25 lb@	\$ 8.00 /bag			=
THISTLE.....	5 lb@	\$ 8.00 /bag			=
SUNFLOWER CHIPS.....	25 lb@	\$22.00 /bag			=

SALES TAX IS INCLUDED IN ALL PRICES ABOVE

Contribution to Sequoia Audubon Society (tax deductible) _____

CHECK # _____

TOTAL _____

THE NEXT SEED SALE WILL NOT BE UNTIL OCTOBER 1999

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

Nuttall's Woodpeckers

Tom Vanden Bosch

In early April last year, we began to notice wood chips on the patio outside our bedroom. Not being too bright we wondered about the source for about a week. Duh!!! Finally Marian noticed Nuttall's Woodpeckers in the Modesto Ash tree over our bedroom and finally located a nest under construction. The nest was about 15 feet off the ground in the end of an almost horizontal stub. The stub had been cut off about 10 years ago and was about 6-8 inches in diameter. The nest hole was about 12 inches from the end of the stub, and on the underside of it. There were live branches growing within 10-12 inches below the nest hole. We estimated that the nest was complete about April 11.

I checked *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* to try to determine when to expect the young to hatch and when they might fledge. The encyclopedia indicated that incubation was about 14 days, but the age of the birds when they fledged was unknown. *An Identification Guide to Woodpeckers of the World* by Winkler, Christie and Nurney indicated that incubation took 14 days and that the young fledged 15 days after hatching. The fun was to observe their behavior to see if the hatching and fledging would be as expected.

I began making daily observations of the nest on April 25, spending one to three hours at a stretch watching the nest. For the first couple of days it was quite warm during the day; temperature in the high 70's to low 80's. The bird in the nest would frequently put its head out of the nest hold with its beak open as if trying to cool off. The incubation was shared by both parents about equally, with perhaps the female doing somewhat more than the male. The birds spent between 10 and 65 minutes at their turns on the nest. The intervals seem to be shorter towards the end of incubation. Both adults almost always left and arrived from the northeast. The arriving bird would call to announce its presence and the leaving bird would leave as soon as the other arrived at the nest hole or occasionally as the other arrived in the area. The nest would be left unoc-

cupied later in the incubation period for up to a half-hour. The birds exhibited an interesting behavior when entering the nest; they would make one to ten abortive moves into the nest before entering. I called the behavior "look ins". Its purpose, if any could be to make sure the nest is in good order, to distract predators by faking entry, or maybe just nervousness of new parents.

The first sign of feeding young occurred on the afternoon of April 30. During the first several days of feeding the young the adults would stay in the nest afterward, waiting for the other parent to arrive with food. This was also a period of cool weather and rain. Initially, both parent birds removed fecal sacs from the nest. As the young got older, only the female did the nest cleaning chores. The parents arrived with food at intervals of one to twenty minutes, usually two to five minutes. Food was brought from all directions to the nest, although the north-east direction was still preferred.

Feeding initially required that the adult bird completely enter the nest. By day 9, the adults had begun to feed by just putting their upper body into the nest hole. When they brought food, the adults would almost always fly to the top of the stub, work around to the bottom below the nest hole, and finally go up to the hole. When leaving, they would go to the top of the stub, out to the end, and then fly off.

The young birds were very vocal from the time they hatched. My hearing is not good so it was not immediately obvious to me, but Marian could hear them and frequently remarked on how noisy they were. They would call continuously, getting very vigorous and loud when the adults were near. As they grew, the volume increased until even I could hear them. Obviously there were no alert woodpecker predators in the area as they would have had an easy time finding the nest.

The young birds first became visible on May 16, seventeen days after feeding started. We could see a head with a red forehead inside the nest hole. By day 21, the young birds had begun to hold their heads out of the nest hole and observe their surroundings. The nestlings called continuously and quite loudly at this point, especially when their heads were

out of the nest hole. I finally was able to identify two young birds in the nest. Nuttall's Woodpeckers are supposed to raise three to six young, usually four to five. There may have been three, but we could see only two. Perhaps the parents are just beginning to breed or perhaps the number of eggs depends on the size of the nest; this one seemed crowded for two birds.

At about day 22, the male commenced almost continuous calling every morning for perhaps 30 to 60 minutes. Was he trying to get the young to leave the nest? The young birds, which we called "red cap" and "black-stripe" based on their head markings, continued to hang their heads out of the hole but showed no desire to leave. The young appeared to be fully developed. They showed no signs of fleshy gape at the base of the bill, preened, and tentatively pecked at the walls of the nest. They took turns at eating. One would get all the feed for several feedings and then trade places with the other. Their behavior suggested they are not competing for food, but taking turns in a bird-civilized manner. The adults were now reducing the frequency of feeding, probably trying to entice the young out of the nest.

On day 25, time between feedings had lengthened to at least an hour. By midday one of the young fledged and by 1:30 in the afternoon, both birds had left the nest. They stayed briefly in the vicinity of the nest, but followed the adult birds when they left the area to feed. When observed the young bird was on a branch swinging its head from side-to-side and calling to be fed. When they first left the nest, one went with each adult. One week after fledging, both of them were seen following the adult female. The male wasn't seen again. The female had with food in her bill, but made no effort feed either of the young.

These Nuttall's Woodpeckers fledged 25 days after hatching, well over the 15 days "according to the book".

It was fun observing the birds and watching the progress of the young. It actually feels a little lonely without them around for entertainment. We hoped they might try to raise a second brood, but now, we are, like the Chicago Cubs, waiting for next year.

April 1, '50 "Big Day"

(Continued from Page 1)

The dawn "chorus" was its usual feeble self, although we did add 5 species or so. I can only imagine what it must have been like in the days of the huge passerine migrations, to hear dozens of species singing and calling in the early light. Then while passing McKeeville on the way to Gazos Creek we nearly ran over a



Swainson's Thrush, one of the best birds of the day. How this bird managed to survive despite the legions of prowling cats sneaking through the laser-buffers of the numerous National Feral Cat Preserves in the area is no small wonder. We hadn't recorded any *Catharus* thrush on a Big Day in over 20 years. This was the first county record in 12 years. Good thing we didn't flatten it in our headlong rush down to the canyon!

Our spirits were starting to pick up as the day went on. None of what happened previously could possibly prepare us for what was to follow at Gazos Creek. In the riparian area near the Cloverdale Ranch Visitor's Center we squeaked out a male Yellow Warbler — critically endangered, first county record in 25 years! As if that wasn't enough, a nearby mixed flock contained a brilliant male Wilson's Warbler! What a rush! Neo-tropical migrants are so scarce now, virtually any sighting is noteworthy.

Pigeon Point had its usual array of pelagic and coastal splendors. Pete Junior's still-sharp eyes picked out a perched Brown Booby on Oil Derrick #4 (not bad for a 50 year-old!). The new ultra-light 200mm scopes really come in handy. Alcid were rare, as always since the ocean temperatures shifted earlier this century. We did manage a lone Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot and a distant Craveri's Murrelet. This was the very place where our parents used to see groups of Marbled Murrelets, back before that species' extinction in '37. Bertina picked out a single sooty Shearwater among the abundant

Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. Three Short-tailed Albatross, while typical numbers for this count, were a welcome sight.

As always, it took forever to get through Cascade Village, but when we did, we were rewarded with some good shorebirding in the Pebble Beach area. Bertina found a Pacific Golden Plover along the edge of the fairway at Gregorio Links South Course. We were able to identify all four of the *Aechmophorus* grebes in a large flock at Pescadero River Mouth, including the newly split local Arroyo Grebe, quite a surprise on the open ocean.

We lost even more time getting past the now-open checkpoint, but while waiting we occupied ourselves by arguing whether a small bird perched atop the solar water generator was a House Finch. These thoughts were immediately dispelled when it burst out with a bizarre series of gurgling sounds. Pete recognized it immediately and called it out just as it was beginning to dawn on me: a Brown-headed Cowbird! We jumped out of the car and sacrificed a few precious minutes admiring and photographing this sharp-looking male, the first one reported away from the Great Basin this year. It's amazing to me that our parents cringed whenever they encountered this beautiful little bird! Fortunately our papers were all in order, and we eventually made our way up the Coastal Freeway through Half Moon City and over the hill. By now it was approaching noon, and our list was a promising 57.

We zipped through the Crystal Springs Checkpoint in a record 1/2 hour, and stopped for a quick check of the Cañada Golf Course ponds, which yielded a surprise Hooded Merganser, very unusual for this late in the season. We scrambled up the Foster City Dike in the hope that a few shorebirds would be hiding at the base of the dike, but there was nothing there. Our main stop along the Bayshore, of course, was the Bair Island Wildlife Refuge, as always a fantastic stop. We picked up most of the hoped-for shorebirds, a few ducks, gulls, terns and skimmers and I managed to find a rare Yellow-headed Blackbird mixed in with the usual mob of Great-tailed Grackles and Shiny Cowbirds. Another big surprise was the Green Heron, tucked right

up against the old electric fence on the northwest end of the Refuge near the Shore City line. The Redwood City parakeet flocks were as challenging as ever.

Despite the limited time and poor views of the birds zipping overhead, we got positive ID's of Canary-winged, Red-mitted and Red-masked Parakeets.

The afternoon was passing faster than we wanted it to, and we still hadn't really checked any of the inland areas. Our good luck continued, however, in a quick stop at the Monterey Pine Preserve off Cañada Road, where we found a small flock of Pygmy Nuthatches in the remnant grove of pines. The oak set-aside in the buffer between the Lower Edgewood and Northern Woodside Golf Courses was as reliable as ever for Large-crowned Deciduous-Oak Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch. After another brief delay at the Skylonda Checkpoint (they are always a lot more mellow up on the ridge), we crossed over Skyline, but unfortunately came up empty at the La Honda Links Mountain Club, the ponds of which are often a good place for unusual waterfowl.

In fading light we made our way back over to the coast. As darkness fell we made a final stop at the venerable Gazos Creek Center for Environmental Studies. We couldn't claim a Spotted Owl in that fabled place like they used to back around the turn of the century, but we did hear a Northern Saw-Whet Owl — a great bird in this day and age.

Our daily total was 124 species, one of our best results in recent years. Thanks again to all our contributors. Until next year!

—Alicia Toldi



Damned fools...missed me again!

Gifts and Bequests

Jean Adams
Lisa Carroll
Bruce and Winifred Homer-Smith

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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