



sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 49, No. 9
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From the President

Robin Smith



Once again I find myself somewhere I never expected to be. Earlier it was in Nepal, gazing at the clouds forming around Everest, then on South Georgia Island toasting the memory of Sir Ernest Shackleton, next with Anne Moser camping on the pack ice by Baffin Island. This time it is as President of Sequoia Audubon Society. It would seem a daunting task ahead except for the dedicated members who already have volunteered to be on the board or to work on committees. There is lots of opportunity for everyone to participate in moving Sequoia forward to the next century. Be part of this adventure!

The year will begin with a celebration of our 50th Anniversary at a picnic in Huddart Park. Mark the date, Saturday, September 18th, on your calendar, come and enjoy the festivities and do bring along a former or future member to join the fun. We would be especially gratified if some of our more senior members whom we haven't seen for a while were to honor us by attending this function.

The coming year will find us in a working partnership with the National Wildlife Refuge at Bair Island through National Audubon's ARK program (Audubon Refuge Keepers). This bayside jewel will be returned to a salt marsh and Sequoia members will have a chance to put our mission statement into practice here. Please plan to take part in these activities and more as we march toward the year 2000.

On a more mundane note, we have been gifted with two computers. While one never looks a gift horse in the mouth, we do need some help on making the machines fully operational. If anyone can help us out, we could use Microsoft Word for a Mac Quadra with the 7.5 operating system. We also need an external CD-ROM drive for this same unit and an external 56K modem for a Mac 6100/60 Power PC, also with a 7.5 operating system.

Any donation would be appreciated, tax-deductible and acknowledged in the *Needles*.

Robin Smith

From the Editor

Cliff Richer



Welcome to the first — and probably the last — August issue of the *Needles*.

This unique edition of our newsletter is actually the last of the 1998-1999 Audubon year, even though it leads off with an article from our new 1999-2000 President and contains a list of our new officers. Another thing that makes it unique is that there is no SAS Calendar and no description of this month's program — not surprising since we have no meeting and no field trips scheduled for August.

So, why an August issue? First, because I was going to be

away for most of the spring, a June issue was impossible and I had committed to producing nine issues each year. Second, and more important, because the *Needles* is the primary means we have of communicating with the membership I felt that three months was too long a hiatus.

So, what's ahead for the fiftieth year of this newsletter? After sixteen years as editor, I'm quite comfortable with the format and tone of the *Needles*. Nevertheless, I remain open to your ideas and comments.

This is *not* my newsletter, it is yours.

We welcome and encourage your participation. We want your articles on any relevant topic — local and national Audubon policies, conservation, birding and natural history are our primary interests and are legitimate subjects for any submission. Politics, although often unavoidable, can be a touchy area. As a nonprofit corporation, we are enjoined from endorsing any candidate or party. We can, however, be advocates for any legislation, initiative or movement that is consistent with the goals of our organization. For example, we can, and should, support any Parklands Bond Initiative, but for us to endorse immigration reform or gun control would be questionable, and to support the Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or Green Party or their candidates would be prohibited. Letters to the Editor are least subject to these restrictions. Articles by the Editor, President or any other member with an official *cachet* are most affected.

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Sequoia's 50th Birthday Bash

The Sequoia Chapter will be celebrating its 50th birthday on Saturday, September 18 at the Redwood Shelter in Huddart Park from 10 AM to 3 PM.

Bring your own picnic lunch. Coffee, Tea and Birthday Cake will be provided by the chapter, as will the charcoal for the barbecues.

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.

From the Conservation Committee

Leslie Flint

The Sequoia Audubon Conservation Committee reviews critical issues related to wildlife habitats and comments to cities, agencies, and other jurisdictions. To attend a meeting of the Committee, phone Leslie Flint at 573-6279.

BAYLANDS ECOSYSTEM HABITAT GOALS — Finally, we have a document focusing on the habitat needs of species that depend on the Bay. The BAYLANDS ECOSYSTEM HABITAT GOALS Report is the culmination of more than three years of work involving more than 100 participants representing state and federal agencies, academia and the private sector. The report makes recommendations for the kinds, amounts and distribution of wetlands and related habitats that are needed to sustain the diverse communities of fish and wildlife that depend on San Francisco Bay. Teams of scientists selected 120 key species representing the nearly 400 species of fish and wildlife that utilize the Bay and Suisun Marsh.

A major premise is that "There should be no additional loss of wetlands within the baylands ecosystem." Recommendations for region-wide change include the protection of many large patches of tidal marsh, large extensive areas of managed seasonal ponds, patches of adjacent uplands and seasonal wetlands and forests. Among specific recommendations also made for each region are: establishment of managed marshes or enhanced seasonal ponds; and provisions for transitions at the marsh/upland ecotone and buffers in the adjacent upland. Examples in San Mateo County include: preservation and restoration of area H in Redwood Shores and the seasonal wetland at Sea Cloud Park in Foster City.

Audubon California and the Bay Area Audubon Chapters are mounting a campaign to build community support for the Goals. Beneficial outcomes would be incorporating habitat restoration principles into general plans of Bay Area counties and cities, and attracting more funding to protect and restore bayland habitats. (*Reprinted in part from The Redwood Log, newsletter of Marin Audubon*)

SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT RUNWAY EXPANSION

— The San Francisco International Airport (SFO) is proposing a new runway configuration plan that would require filling approximately 1400 acres, two square miles of the Bay. This is equivalent to four Treasure Islands!! The reason for this proposal is to increase the distance between parallel runways to allow simultaneous landings in poor weather, which are not currently permitted. (SFO has, according to John Martin, Director of SFO, the worst on-time record in the country.) A fill project of this magnitude will potentially have significant impacts on the biological and hydrological environments of the South Bay, requiring massive mitigation. One proposal being widely discussed as mitigation is the acquisition and tidal marsh restoration of 29,000 acres (45 sq. miles) of San Francisco Bay historic wetlands currently being used by Cargill Salt Company for salt production. A spokesperson for Cargill recently commented: "We're in the business to stay. We are not opposed to

the airport.... But we don't feel that the salt industry has to be terminated so that the airport can have a project." (*San Jose Mercury News, 6/24/99*)

Public hearings were held during the month of July and a formal Environmental Impact process will begin this summer. This process could last more than a year. The San Francisco Planning Commission will have the responsibility of accepting or denying the EIA because the city owns the airport and some of the bay land surrounding the airport. Then it will be up to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board, EPA, and other agencies to say yea or nay.

To date, Audubon California and the local Audubon chapters have not taken a position on this project because, while we would all like more wetlands added to the Refuge, (see Goals project above), no one yet knows the true impact of 80 million cubic yards of bay fill. This is an important regional issue - get involved!

SAS Web Page Moves

Bill Grohl has moved our web page from the City of Belmont's website to National Audubon's. Our new address is <http://Sequoia.CA.Audubon.org/>.

Back when we were first considering setting up a web page, some of our directors and other members were struggling with it when Bill came along and volunteered to do it for us. Bill not only did a hell of a job in creating the page, but he has been maintaining it ever since.

This would be just another nice, but fairly typical, piece of volunteerism except that Bill moved to Texas more than two years ago!

A very special recognition and a belated thank you to Bill Grohl!

HMB Students 5th in National Ocean Science Bowl Contest

Students from Half Moon Bay High School participated in the Second Annual National Ocean Science Bowl at U.C. Santa Cruz on February 20.

They reached the quarterfinals and placed fifth after being eliminated by the eventual winners, Mission San Jose High School of Fremont.

Team members were **Cory Palmer, Gina Hurlbut, Germaine Wroblewski, Karissa Patterson, and June Gruber**. All the students were seniors at HMBHS and members of the school's marine biology class.

From the Editor

(Continued from Page One)

So, keeping those guidelines in mind, we want to hear from you. Let us have your opinions, your ideas, your experiences or anything relevant that you want to impart to the rest of us. Once again, it is **your** newsletter, and we need you to keep it as exciting, diverse and relevant as possible.

Gazos Creek Center for Environmental Studies

The Gazos Creek Center for Environmental Studies (GCC) is a creation of the Pescadero Conservation Alliance, a newly formed non-profit conservation group dedicated to the restoration and stewardship of the western watersheds of the Santa Cruz Mountains through environmental education, scientific research, and practical action.

The goals of the Alliance are to:

1. Create a center for environmental science and practical land stewardship.
2. Develop skill and expertise in land restoration and stewardship through practical action as well as scientific research and evaluation.

3. Involve the whole community in the restoration and stewardship of local ecosystems and the sustainable management of agriculture and forest products.

The vision of the GCC is based on the realization that environmental health is an issue for the entire community.

At the GCC the emphasis will be on practical community solutions to environmental challenges rather than on confrontation and blame.

Students, researchers and interns at the GCC will be encouraged to discover approaches that unify rather than divide communities and natural systems.

The GCC is using the Mountain Camp, owned by the Sempervirens Fund non-profit land trust. At some time in the near future, Sempervirens will turn the Camp over to an organization which can protect and manage the property. Most likely that organization will be the State Parks. The Alliance is working with Sempervirens and State Parks to continue the camp as an environmental education and research facility.

The Gazos Creek Center for Environmental Studies is one vision of what that facility might be. The Alliance is seeking community input support as well.

If you wish to help you can call Bert McKee, Chairman of the Pescadero Conservation Alliance at 879-0618, Randy Bennett, Director of Operations at 879-0841 or Executive Director John Wade at 299-9528.

Yellow Starthistle

Bill Korbholz

Yellow starthistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, is a prickly, noxious weed which has now become the most common plant in California.

It originated in the Old World and probably arrived in California in the mid-1800s as a contaminant in alfalfa seed. It is a member of the sunflower family and belongs to the thistle tribe.

Since its introduction, yellow starthistle has spread steadily and aggressively. In 1985 it was estimated to inhabit about 8 million acres statewide; now it has infested some 22 million acres, or about 22% of the state. In less than 15 years it has nearly tripled its penetration.

Yellow starthistle is a serious threat to the biological diversity of California grasslands. Because it is deep rooting (the taproot can reach well over 3 feet in length) and grows in the summer, it is occupying a niche not previously filled by either native or other exotic species.

It is an extremely prolific annual. Individual plants typically produce thousands of seeds, 95% of which generally germinate. Germination usually occurs the following year, but some seeds can last more than 10 years before sprouting.

Yellow starthistle is the most aggressive invasive plant at Edgewood Park. It has overtaken entire meadows and has even begun to establish itself in serpentine grasslands which provide the home to the Bay checkerspot butterfly.

Various methods have been discussed in the literature to control yellow starthistle. At Edgewood, a program combining mowing, manual removal, and selective re-vegetation may be the most promising method of control.

The Friends of Edgewood and CNPS are working with Parks and Recreation staff to develop a battle plan to address this serious threat.

Volunteers are desperately needed to assist with manual removal. To get involved and help save Edgewood from becoming a giant yellow starthistle meadow, call Ken Himes at 591-8560.

(Reprinted from the June 1999 issue of the Edgewood Explorer, the newsletter of the Friends of Edgewood. Natural Preserve.)

Coyotes on the Sawyer Camp Trail

Rex Caufield

San Mateo County Park Ranger

A coyote attack has occurred on the Sawyer Camp Trail and there have been sightings of bold coyotes walking on the trail. The problem with the coyotes began last winter, when three hikers reported they were attacked near Crystal Springs Reservoir. One woman was bitten. Others had coyotes tear their clothing when they turned and ran.

It is not uncommon to see coyotes. However, they are usually extremely wary of humans and will avoid people whenever possible. Bold and aggressive displays are not considered normal.

Since coyotes are believed to be more likely to pounce on hikers at dawn and dusk while hunting for food, officials began enforcing the often ignored regulations against using Sawyer Camp Trail before sunrise and after sunset.

Nobody knows how to change aggressive behavior once exhibited, so when coyotes begin to show aggression toward humans, the animals must be trapped and disposed of humanely. Five coyotes have been killed since the initial incident.

County Parks Director Mary Burns said she wants the coyotes and recreational users to co-exist and that means respecting the animals' territorial habits. "This is a wildlife preserve. We're in the coyote's territory — not vice versa," she said.

Several factors can contribute to bold behavior patterns. Our behavior influences their behavior and we can minimize potential conflicts by our actions. Here is what you should and shouldn't do:

Don't encourage the animals — they are "stretching" their tolerance of humans. Don't make it easier for them.

Don't feed the animals — this can lead them to think of you as a food source.

Don't turn your back or run away — A predator's natural reaction is to chase you and bring you down.

Make noise and try to look big — Coyotes are naturally non-confrontational and will normally retreat.

Leave the area calmly — Back away slowly. Once the confrontation is over, turn and walk away.

Has DWP Seen the Light?

In April the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) called a meeting to discuss restoration activities in the Mono Basin. According to Peter Kavounas, DWP's Mono Basin restoration manager the meeting was called to "improve communications."

All of DWP's consultants were on hand as was Gene Coufel, who oversees the aqueduct operations.

Observers reported an amazing change in attitude by DWP. Instead of being close-mouthed and guarded, the consultants were open in their assessments of present and future plans and came forward with many legitimate proposals to enhance the environment and the fisheries instead of parroting the old and discredited "party line".

One of the concepts coming out of the meeting was the creation of an electronic bulletin board where day to day developments and new information could be posted so that both the scientists and the Mono Lake Committee as well as the general public could track the progress of the restoration and offer input.

There have been changes in the management of DWP over the last few years and it is beginning to look as if this meant more than just new faces. As Heidi Hopkins, Mono Lake Committee's Eastern Sierra Policy Director commented, "The open congenial exchange of ideas at the meeting bodes well for the future of restoration at Mono Lake."

Other notes from Mono Lake:

The lake has risen to 6585' above sea level, 12 feet higher than its low point in 1993 when diversions were curtailed.

The Mono Lake Committee is once again holding its Restoration Days over the Labor Day Weekend. Guided walking and canoe tours, birding field trips, educational tours, seminars and exhibits all feature this three day celebration of the lake's revival. If you're planning to go, make your hotel and canoe tour (760-647-6595) reservations early.

An international Living Lakes Conference will be held at Lee Vining from October 1-4. This is the third such conference, the first two being held at Lake St. Lucia in South Africa and at Lake Con-

stance in Germany. The conferees are members of organizations like the Mono Lake Committee, dedicated to saving specific bodies of water.

Violinist David Abel and Pianist Julie Steinberg will hold a benefit concert for Mono Lake on November 7 at the St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley. Call Kathie Dieden 510-642-2666 for more information.

The DWP will begin a dust control program in the Owens Valley this fall. The plan calls for a partial restoration and re-vegetation of Owens Lake and for covering other portions of the old lake bed with gravel. The project will continue until the Owens Valley meets the federal clean air standards year-round.

San Juan Canyon Preservation Trust

San Juan Canyon in Belmont has a significant amount of undeveloped land, mostly hilly. A group of local citizens seeing that this open space is threatened by potential development have formed the *San Juan Canyon Preservation Trust*, a non-profit organization dedicated to acquiring vacant parcels of land to be deeded to the City with open space restrictions. Many Belmont residents are supporting the Trust through volunteer efforts and tax-deductible donations and some landowners have already come forward with offers to sell property to the Trust at below-market prices.

The Trust, literally a "grass-roots" movement, offers you a chance to participate in a project that will produce lasting benefits. Donations of time, money or property are needed.

In addition to community involvement, the Trust is seeking corporate sponsorship and foundation grants to help acquire the 347 lots covering 171 acres. Currently the appraised value is more than \$13 million so the task is daunting.

Please contact George Kramer, President, if you are willing to donate time, money, or property. Call 593-7295 or send tax-deductible donations to:

San Juan Canyon Preservation Trust
1902 Notre Dame
Belmont, CA 94002

What's in a Name?

Cliff Richer

During the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, explorers and naturalists "immortalized" themselves by having newly discovered species named for them. The convention was that the first person to describe the species could name it, but not after himself. This led to considerable back-scratching. For example, Merriweather Lewis discovered Lewis' Woodpecker but had William Clark describe it. The favor was later returned when Lewis described Clark's Nutcracker.

A similar situation occurred with three British explorer/naturalists of the Arctic. Sir John Franklin was a noted, if somewhat inept, seeker of the North Pole and the Northwest Passage. On his first voyage in 1818 he turned back when his ships got stuck in pack ice. His second voyage to the far north of Canada ended in starvation, murder and cannibalism. His third voyage, to the same area, was uneventful. Nothing was discovered, but nobody died so Franklin returned to England as a hero. Eighteen years passed before his final expedition's two ships set out to find the Northwest Passage. The ships disappeared and Franklin was never heard of again.

Sir James Clark Ross, on the other hand, helped discover the magnetic pole, led a successful Arctic exploration of his own and led one of the attempts to find and rescue Franklin. He was generally considered the leading authority on the Arctic until his peaceful death in 1862.

Edward Adams was the naturalist and assistant surgeon on Ross' attempt to find Franklin and later participated in one of the other expeditions to rescue the ill-fated explorer. He was acclaimed for the ornithological and geologic discoveries he made on these two journeys and is usually credited with naming both Ross' and Franklin's Gulls. He is himself commemorated in the scientific name of the Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*).



Birding Point Pelee

Merry Haveman

David and I flew into Detroit on May 8th, picked up our rental car and headed for the bridge to Canada. Customs was a snap — they even have a free money exchange at the toll booth. We arrived at our Lodging in Leamington, Ontario at dusk, in the rain. During a good Chinese dinner next door at the Happy Inn we noticed that most tables had at least one customer with a field guide in hand. It became obvious to us here that we were no longer in California as smoke drifted over from an adjoining table.

May 9 — The alarm was set to get up early and we were at Point Pelee waiting for the gate to open at 5:00 AM. The rain had stopped, but there was a light breeze. We drove to the visitor center lot and listened to the surf of Lake Ontario as we waited in the car for it to get light. As the sky started to lighten, the unmistakable “peenting” of the American Woodcock was heard near by. This was our signal to get birding! The Woodcock was in a grassy area next to the parking lot, first life bird of the trip!

Before leaving the parking lot, we added Baltimore Oriole, Gray Catbird, Orchard Oriole, Eastern Kingbird and Warbling Vireo to the day list. The day dawned overcast and cool as we followed arriving birders to the tram which we took to the Point. The trees were just starting to show the fresh green of emerging buds. At the end of the tram ride, it is only a short walk to the point where we encountered our second life bird of the trip — a Great Black-backed Gull. It was impressive to see about 70 Common Terns wheeling about.

We walked from the Point to the visitor center arriving back at 12:30 and enjoyed the birders' lunch provided by Friends of Point Pelee. We had seen many warblers and vireos along the way. After lunch, we birded other areas of the park and ended up at the Marsh Boardwalk. That would have been very dull if a Black Tern had not flown in and landed on the boardwalk in front of us. This was a life bird for David. Other highlights of the

day included a Common Nighthawk sleeping on a horizontal branch above one of the trails in Tilden Woods, Solitary Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher (life bird), Blue-headed Vireo (life bird), Veery (life bird), Brown Thrasher, Blue-winged Warbler (life bird), Tennessee, Nashville, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Palm, Hooded & Canada Warblers, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Eastern Towhee, Northern Cardinal and Indigo Bunting.



May 10 — Our second day at Point Pelee started much the same with the American Woodcock as first bird of the day. We took the tram out to the Point and, this time, also took it back to the visitor center. There was no overcast and no breeze, it was going to be a warm day. At the Point, we could tell there were fewer birds. One very tired Red-eyed Vireo was an obvious new arrival. While at the point we also added Least Flycatcher (life bird), Yellow-throated Vireo (life bird), and Chestnut-sided and Prothonotary Warblers.

We had learned by this time to check in at the Visitor Center for reports of new sightings. This had us heading to Tilden Woods where we were able to locate a beautiful male Scarlet Tanager (life bird).

Our last stop on our way out of the park was at Sanctuary. Many good birds were being reported from this area and it proved to be very birdy. In the parking lot we added Cape May and Bay-breasted

Warblers and on the walk, Wood Thrush (life bird).

We left Point Pelee in the afternoon and stopped by Hillman Marsh. In a field along the levee, we had a flock of 300+ American Golden Plovers and about 30 Black-bellied Plovers, most in full breeding plumage. There were also Purple Martins flying below eye level. At the parking lot for Hillman Marsh, the highlight was a mink ducking in and out of the rocks and logs along the shore.

We drove back into Michigan in the early evening and headed north looking for dinner and a place to stay the night. We settled on the Innkeepers along 175, it later won our vote for the second worst place we have ever stayed at.

May 11 — There was no place open for breakfast, so we had Ginger Snaps and water in the car at our first stop of the day, River Bends Park near Shelby Township. This was supposed to be good for Golden-winged Warbler and Cuckoos. We added Black-capped Chickadee, replacing an old undated record from Washington State. On the walk out, we saw our first Ruby-throated Hummingbird (life bird).

Second stop of the day was at Bald Mt. State Recreation Area. On a wooded trail south of the main parking lot we came upon a Solitary Sandpiper and a Louisiana Waterthrush (life bird). When we came out on a service road I recognized the call of a Field Sparrow. My hours of listening to the eastern edition of *Birding By Ear* was paying off! The bird was singing from somewhere uphill and, after we located a trail, we followed it until it opened up into a grassy area where we were able to locate the Field Sparrow (life bird) after some searching.

After lunch we located the recommended area to bird Bald Mt. off Green Shield Road, but its close proximity to a shooting range made birding less than appealing.

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Birding Point Pelee

(Continued from Page Five)

We made a brief stop at Crow Island Game Area and saw our first countable Mute Swans (life bird). There were also three pairs of Black Terns in the area. We would have liked to stay longer, but had to head for Lake City in time for dinner with David's parents, his brother and his new sister-in-law.

May 12 — We did some birding in the morning, staying close to Lake City. Below Reedsburg Dam we found a Solitary and four Spotted Sandpipers. A pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in the trees at the parking lot. When it started raining, we headed to Lake City to do some shopping before heading back to visit with the folks.

May 13 — After breakfast, we headed for Grayling to look for a Kirtland's Warbler. We found out that at Grayling you can get on the tours which then go to Mio, where the warblers were located. However, the tours were not due to start until after we would be returning home so we picked up a tour route map and, with a late start, headed out. There were numerous Nashville Warblers and Chipping Sparrows, but no Kirtland's. We were lucky to see a Ruffed Grouse along the road it soon flew across the road in front of us and out of sight into the woods. At the Ruffed Grouse Walk, we had Ovenbird and Scarlet Tanager. Back at Mio where the tour loop begins we had lunch then went to the Forest Service Office. There they gave us a map that shows all the tracks and sandy roads in the area and pinpointed for us where a Kirtland's had been seen that morning. We located the area, but mid-afternoon on a warm sunny day, there was nothing moving. We stayed as long as we could but had to get back to Lake City to visit with David's two nieces who were driving in to see us.

May 14 — We set the alarm and got an early start for Mio, determined not to come home without finding a Kirtland's Warbler. We returned directly to the spot where the Kirtland's had been reported



and almost immediately heard one singing. It took another half hour to finally get to see the Kirtland's Warbler (life bird). The pressure was off! After that we continued on the tour route in a more leisurely manner.

There are beautiful areas to pull off for scenic views of the Au Sable River. At one spot near Glennie we looked out over the Au Sable River valley and saw an adult Bald Eagle soaring over the river.

That last evening we took David's folks out to dinner. Afterward, they took us up in their four-seater Cessna Skyhawk to give us an aerial tour. The area is beautiful and the trees were spectacular in the glow of a setting sun, but it was sad to see how much clear cutting has been done and how fragmented the forests were.

May 15 — We said our good-bys after breakfast and headed south. We stopped in Gladwin at the Au Sable State Forest, in Hope and Mills Townships, trying again for Golden-winged Warbler with no luck. We arrived late at the Chippewa Nature Center after getting lost and driving in circles. Birding in the fading light, we added only Eastern Meadowlark to the trip list. We had heard that Pileated Woodpeckers and Barred Owls nested there, but had no luck in finding them. Finally we settled in at the Best Western in Bay City, our most comfortable night of the trip.

May 16 — Our last morning in Michigan was spent at Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area north of Bay City. We added a few species to the trip list — Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Swamp Sparrow (life bird), Bobolink and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Point Pelee was the best birding we have ever experienced. Many of the warblers and the Bobolink, though not life birds, were the first ones we had seen in breeding plumage. We used the Bird Finding Guide to Michigan by Black & Smith. There are many more birds we would have liked to see. They will have us looking forward to a return trip.

Del Valle Regional Park Under Threat

The Alameda County Water Agency which serves the Pleasanton- Livermore-Dublin and area has prepared a draft Environmental Impact Report on its water supply planning program to the year 2020. The report has generated widespread opposition because the proposed water extraction from Lake Del Valle could reduce the reservoir to a mud flat.

The plan is to drop the water level about 63 feet in late summer and early fall leaving docks, swimming beaches, campgrounds, boat launch ramps and other recreational facilities about a mile away from the water.

The East Bay Regional Parks District which has invested millions of dollars in recreation facilities and in managing the lake as a regional park for the State Department of Water Resources is understandably upset. Biologists and birders are concerned about what the impact would be on the Bald Eagles that only recently returned to Lake Del Valle for foraging and nesting, fledging the only Bald Eagles in the Bay Area in the last century. Public comments were extremely negative toward this plan and it is likely that the water district will go back to the drawing board on this one.

Nesting Materials

Lots of people like to put out nesting material for birds. One of the materials that we've often seen mentioned in various articles is lint from your clothes dryer.

Brenda Best, of Oneida Co., NY, took exception to this and submitted this on the Internet, "This dryer lint idea has been around for awhile. It really is not a good idea. Try this. Sprinkle some dryer lint with a little water. See how soggy and matted it becomes? This will **not** keep nestlings dry and warm. Now set the wet lint somewhere to dry, then check its consistency. Sort of hard and stiff, right?"

"My point is, lint is only fluffy after it's been dried by warm, blowing air in a clothes dryer and, combined with the fact that there are detergent and/or fabric softener residues in it, lint should not be used."

Mountain Plover A New Threatened Species?

Dorothy Gyurko

This bird is now being considered by the US. Fish and Wildlife Services for listing as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

This bird mostly winters in California as individuals in the Central Valley and in flocks in Antelope Valley, Panoche Valley, the Carrizo Plain and other less well-known locations. In the future fewer may be reported here, as well as in the ten other western states, Mexico, and Canada where the plover breeds or winters.



The Mountain Plover is one of nine bird species endemic to the North American grasslands. Grassland birds have declined more rapidly than other species in North America, and the Mountain Plover's decline is greater than that of other grassland endemics. Breeding bird surveys show that between 1966 and 1991, the continental population of the species declined an estimated 63 percent. The current total population is estimated to be between 8,000 and 10,000.

Mountain Plovers evolved together with large nomadic herds of bison, elk and pronghorn, and burrowing mammals such as kangaroo rats, prairie dogs and badgers. The activities of these animals developed a mosaic of vegetation and bare ground to which Mountain Plovers became adapted. Now, with the native grazing herds gone and the number of prairie dog towns reduced, the Mountain Plovers show a strong affiliation for sites heavily grazed by domestic livestock. They attempt breeding on fallow and cultivated fields that mimic their historic short grass prairie habitat. These new habitats pose

many threats to the plover, including the introduction of uniform tall non-native grasses for livestock grazing; the destruction of the nests and eggs by farm equipment; and exposure to pesticides. The plover's narrow range of habitat requirements, combined with its site fidelity, increase its vulnerability.

After careful assessment of the best scientific and commercial information on threats faced by the Mountain Plover, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that, while not in immediate danger of extinction, the Mountain Plover is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future unless measures are taken to reverse its decline. Therefore, the FWS has proposed to list the Mountain Plover as a threatened species.

For those interested in more information, a starting point could be to read the summary of the findings of the Fish and Wildlife Service in the *Federal Register*, Vol.64, No.30.

(Condensed from an article in the April 1999 issue of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, newsletter of the Tucson, AZ Audubon Society.)

Donations

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In addition these persons were instrumental in obtaining computers for our use: **Chris Thollaug** of Sierra Club's Loma Prieta Chapter and **Louis Roth** of Sony Signature.

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Some More Theories Debunked — Sorta...

Reverse Sexual Dimorphism (which sounds vaguely obscene) is nothing more than the well-known phenomenon of the females being larger than the males, a condition that is normal among raptors.

A lot of theories have been advocated as to why this should be — and based on a survey conducted by biologists Paul Catry, Richard Phillips and Robert Furness — none of these theories holds water. These three men studied jaegers and skuas and failed to support the theories that a) larger females are more efficient incubators and nest defenders or b) that smaller males are better providers.



The only conclusions that the biologists come to with regard to RSD was that their data may not apply to raptors since skuas and jaegers are more closely related to gulls; that males actually are more active in nest defense than females; and that females seem to prefer smaller males (for whatever reason).

Habitat Competition?

Kenn Kaufman, writing in *Birdwatchers' Digest*, noted that Brewer's Blackbirds are our major parking lot birds along the California coast, but are rarely seen in parking lots elsewhere. He speculates that, for some species, the parking lot may be prime habitat, and competition may determine who's the boss of the asphalt. For example in his home territory of Tucson, the large and aggressive Great-tailed Grackle is the dominant parking lot bird.

Sequoia's 50th Birthday Bash

The Sequoia Chapter will be celebrating its 50th birthday on Saturday, September 18
at the Redwood Shelter in Huddart Park from 10 AM to 3 PM.

Bring your own picnic lunch.

Coffee, Tea and Birthday Cake will be provided by the chapter, as will the charcoal for the barbecues.

A parking fee of \$4 per car will be charged by County Parks.

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://Sequoia.CA.Audubon.org/>

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