



sequoia needles

Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society
San Mateo County Volume 50, No. 4
December, 1999/January, 2000

This Month's Program The Bair Island Docent Program



Clyde Morris, the manager of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, will present a program updating us on the present plans for Bair Island and how we can help by providing docents for interpretation and preservation.

In the past Clyde has managed the wetland protection program for the EPA for the area covering California, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii. He has also been a park ranger, outdoor recreation planner and Peace Corp volunteer helping Honduras establish a national park system.

His slide presentation will cover the the story of Bair Island, historic impacts to it, plans for restoration of endangered species habitat and issues that need to be resolved in order to restore the island to its former tidal wetland habitat as well as opportunities for participating in our Volunteer program at Bair Island.

He will also lead a walk around Inner Bair Island for SAS on December 5 at 9 AM. He will cover some of the same items as will be shown in the slide show as well as show us some wintering birds using the island.

NOTE: Santa Clara Valley Audubon has been invited to our Christmas Potluck & Program.

January

AUSTRALIA will be the subject of our January program. The Cheesemans will be our presenters with Doug giving a slide presentation with two projectors in a lapse-dissolve system. Gail will augment the program with some recordings of Australian bird songs.

The program will show birds, marsupials and reptiles in slides taken on their eight Australian trips. Other tours have taken them to Antarctica, Bolivia, Kenya, the Galapagos and Costa Rica. He has taught zoology and ecology at De Anza College for 35 years and his photos have been featured in *Audubon*, *Ranger Rick* and *National Geographic*.



From the President

December, for birders, signals the time for Christmas Bird Counts. And here it is December again!

A few years ago when I was a new co-compiler of Sequoia Audubon's Crystal Springs count, something very interesting happened.

As you know, a Christmas Bird Count takes place within a predetermined circle that is 15 miles in diameter. The circle for Crystal Springs roughly covers the area from just below San Bruno down to Redwood City and from the bay through the watershed lands to the coast. The many different habitats and the relatively pleasant winter weather make it a supremely good area in which to see lots of different bird species. This count usually ranks among the top ten in the United States.

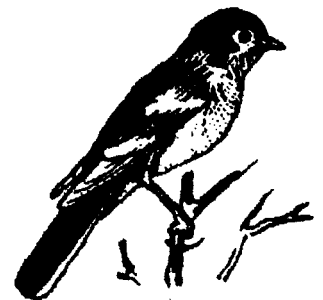
It takes lots of enthusiastic birders for a successful count. But all the counters do not have to be out at the crack-of-dawn, nor do they all have to hike for miles. Some drive, some walk, some ride bicycles and some pilot wheel chairs. Some don't leave home, they watch the feeders in their yards. Virginia Clifford, a long-time Sequoia member from Millbrae is one of our dedicated feeder counters.

Over the years Virginia has had the usual feeder birds on count day; finches, sparrows, an occasional robin or jay, a yellow rumped warbler, nothing startling. She dutifully sends in her report to be included in the total. A couple of years ago, though, we got her report along with an apology for having seen only one bird. "I only saw one bird Saturday; it was a Townsend's Solitaire."

We could hardly believe this stroke of good fortune. We called to verify the sighting and Virginia said not to worry, she'd send us a photograph. She didn't seem to be overly excited, but my co-compiler and I were ecstatic!

This a rare bird for our area. In the first 25 years of the count it was reported only once! But in 1997 no one else had seen a Townsend's Solitaire, so it added another species to the count total. The photograph arrived and there was the bird, dubbed Marco Solo by Virginia, looking into her kitchen through the window behind the sink. He spent the winter there but didn't return for the 1998 count.

Is there a moral to this tale? Of course! It takes all of us to have a successful Christmas Bird Count. From the feeder watchers to the early morning owlers, from those who trek through the watersheds to those who scour the suburbs. So please plan to fill one of the niches for the Crystal Springs and Ano Nuevo counts this year. It will be a rewarding way to start the next hundred years of Christmas Bird Counts.



Robin Smith

Robin Smith

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

DECEMBER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1999 — COYOTE POINT

— A special weekday field trip to explore the birds and environmental assets of this very special area. The trip will begin at 9:00 AM. We'll meet at the lower end of the museum parking lot near the picnic benches. Moderate walking makes this a good trip for the whole family. (Entrance Fee Required) **RAIN CANCELS.**

LEADER SUE COSSINS 347-9358

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2 — BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

— 7:30 PM — At the Sequoia Audubon office. All members are welcome. Call ahead to make sure that there will be enough room.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4 — SEA CLOUD PARK —

This is our monthly beginners field trip. information on use of binoculars and field guides will be given and there will be opportunity to ask questions. Sea Cloud Park in Foster City is reached by taking Hillsdale Avenue east from 101 and making a right turn on Edgewater Blvd. Go 1.3 miles and turn left on Pitcairn Drive. Look for the park entrance on the right and meet at the far end of the parking lot at 9 AM. **HEAVY RAIN CANCELS**

LEADER FRANCIS TOLDI 344-1919

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1999 — BAIR ISLAND — Come visit Bair Island, the newest addition to the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (SFBNWR). See for yourself why this vital area has been adopted by Sequoia Audubon Society under the National Audubon's Refuge Keepers (ARK) Program. Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking area at the east end of Whipple Avenue. **HEAVY RAIN CANCELS**

LEADER CLYDE MORRIS SFBNWR MANAGER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 — GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER — Clyde Morris will present a program on **Bair Island** and how we can help implement its incorporation into the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (See Page One for details), following the Potluck (See Page Eight for details), at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside at 6:30 PM.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18 — THE CRYSTAL SPRINGS CHRISTMAS COUNT

See Page Five for Details

Sign Up Now!

The Crystal Springs Count is regularly one of the top ten for numbers of species identified and is often joined by the Año Nuevo Count. Only one thing distinguishes our counts from the other top counts — numbers of participants. Hundreds of birders turn out for the southeastern Texas counts and top birders from all over California look at the Moss Landing Count as an annual reunion. Compare this to our 30-50 birders! We need you!

The Millennium Cometh

JANUARY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2 — THE AÑO NUEVO CHRISTMAS COUNT

See Page Five for Details

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 2000 — SEA CLOUD PARK —

This is our monthly beginners field trip. Information on use of binoculars and field guides will be given. and there will be an opportunity to ask questions. Sea Cloud Park in Foster City is reached by taking Hillsdale Avenue east from 101 and making a right turn on Edgewater Blvd. Go 1.3 miles and turn left on Pitcairn Drive. Look for the park entrance on the right and meet at the far end of the parking lot at 9 AM. **HEAVY RAIN CANCELS.**

LEADER LESLIE FLINT

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2000 — SHARP PARK

SHORE AND GOLF COURSE — This area can be extremely productive as it encompasses a harbor with scoters, loons and mergansers, a beach, a freshwater marsh and isolated groves of trees, all of which have yielded surprises. Meet at 9 AM at the Anchor Monument south of the fishing pier on Sharp Park Beach. The trip should break up at noon. **HEAVY RAIN CANCELS**

LEADER JUDY SPITLER 355-9362

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29 & SUNDAY JANUARY 30 — LOS BANOS REFUGES AND PANOCHE VALLEY FIELD TRIP.

One of our highlight field trips of the year covering two diverse areas and exposing us to a variety of rare and unusual birds. The four refuges north of Los Banos are noted for White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, a large variety of waterfowl and shore birds, raptors and owls. Twenty miles south of Los Banos, Little Panoche Road winds its way through the Diablo Range into Panoche Valley where wintering flocks of Mountain Plovers, Vesper Sparrows, Mountain Bluebirds, Long Billed Curlews and perched raptors vie with the resident Roadrunners, Phainopeplas and Chukars for the birders' attention. Saturday we plan on meeting in the parking lot of the Los Banos Wildlife Area on Henry Miller Road north of the town of Los Banos at 9:00 AM. Sunday we will meet at the parking lot above Little Panoche Detention Reservoir at 8:30 AM. The trips will go on rain or shine. Motel reservations are recommended at this time of year. Call the leader to let him know how many to expect at each rendezvous point.

LEADER CLIFF RICHER 873-1754

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The Passenger Pigeon and the Carolina Parakeet became officially extinct a few yards and a few days apart when the last bird of each species died at the Cincinnati Zoo in September, 1914.

John Burroughs, the noted naturalist, regretted for the rest of his life that the last Passenger Pigeon he ever saw was the one he shot and ate for dinner in 1876.

From the Conservation Committee

Anne Moser

The Fitzgerald Marine Reserve Master Plan

The Fitzgerald Marine Reserve Draft Master Plan was distributed in August. (You can get a copy by calling 363-1823). Gary Deghi was Sequoia's delegate to the Advisory Committee.

The goals of the Master Plan are:

- Preserve and enhance natural resources
- Protect cultural resources
- Provide educational opportunities
- Improve baseline information
- Improve visitor management
- Improve visitor facilities
- Minimize impacts to neighbors
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Provide adequate, well-trained staff
- Seek funding opportunities

The fundamental concept underlying the Master Plan is protection of the outstanding natural resources of the Reserve. This will require a change in the management of visitors in future years. The best way to accomplish this goal is to:

- Emphasize the sensitivity of the Reserve
- Enhance its educational value
- Manage visitation
- Limit use of the Reserve as a recreation destination.

The Master Plan has three main components, a Natural Resource Management Program, Visitor Management Program and a Uses and Facilities Program.

Natural Resource Management

1. Natural resources within the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve will be protected and restored through development and Implementation of resource management policies and programs.
2. Visitor management policies and programs will be a priority mission.
3. Moss Beach Reef and Frenchman's Reef will be continuously monitored over a minimum period of 10 years to develop baseline information on the ecological system, to determine the rate and degree of recovery, and to determine the effectiveness of Master Plan. Biological monitoring has been conducted by Reserve staff and volunteers since 1973

and the Reserve now participates in a joint research program with San Francisco State University. Additional monitoring and scientific investigations are needed to establish baseline information. The Plan calls for participation by state Fish & Game and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary with a detailed report every two years.

4. Portions of the Moss Beach Reef may be closed to visitors as warranted by environmental conditions, research objectives, and monitoring activities.

5. The feasibility of restoring tidal action to the freshwater marsh across West Point Avenue NE of the existing saltwater marsh will be determined.

6. Water quality improvements in San Vicente Creek and Pillar Point Marsh will be undertaken. This will involve considerable interaction with landowners, the Half Moon Bay Airport, surrounding communities and local resource agencies to develop best management practices to improve water quality in the San Vicente, Denniston Creek and other drainages.

7. Special status wildlife and plant species shall be protected within the Reserve, and management plans shall be developed to protect and restore all identified special status species.

8. A vegetation management program will be developed to restore and protect native plant communities. Specific objectives of this program will be to maintain the grove of Monterey cypresses and to restore native vegetation to other areas. The Monterey cypresses will be thinned and eucalyptus trees will be removed as will young cypress trees invading adjacent native habitat.

9. Maintain the historic character and health of the plant community at the Smith-Dolger historic site. The landscape surrounding the Smith-Dolger home contributes to the historic character of the site. Although some of the plants are not native, they are typical of early California settlements. This landscape should be protected and maintained. Invasive exotic plants should be removed.

10. Acquire land in the vicinity of Pillar Point Marsh and land eastward of the Marine Reserve to add to the Reserve.

11. Introduction and possession of domestic and feral animals, including dogs, cats, ducks and any non-

naturalized species are prohibited. Dogs on leash will be allowed on the Coastal Trail. Actions will be taken to reduce the existing populations of feral animals.

12. Hunting, fishing gathering and collecting will be prohibited. Fishing within the reef has been responsible for degradation of its marine life, as have illegal gathering and collecting.

Visitor Management

1. Visitor use of the Reserve will be managed and limited to the number of persons that can be accommodated without damage. Visitor use of the Moss Beach Reef will be limited to a maximum of 300 persons at one time with a target goal of no more than 500 persons in one day for a minimum period of ten years. Visitor use of Frenchman's Reef will be limited to a maximum of 200 persons at one time to preserve their relatively pristine quality, biodiversity and richness. These areas will be used as a control for evaluating the degree and rate of recovery of the Moss Beach Reef.

Recreation use in the Pillar Point Marsh area will occur in designated areas, and not in the marsh itself.

2. The primary purpose of visitor use of the Reserve will be education.

Informational materials, signage and other materials will emphasize the educational mission of the Reserve while recreational use of the reefs and marsh will be discouraged.

3. All groups are required to make advance reservations to go onto the reef. "Group" is defined to mean more than 4 persons.

4. Each group will be limited to no more than 100 individuals.

5. Any group of 20 or more individuals must be lead by a staff member, docent or other qualified leader.

6. Visitor fees will be charged for access, visitor services and parking.

7. Parking regulations will be clearly signed and strictly enforced in residential areas surrounding the Reserve.

8. Parking and driving on West Point Avenue leading to Pillar Point will be discouraged through parking regulations, development of a new parking area, provisions for a turn around,

(Continued on Page Four)

Fitzgerald Marine Reserve

(Continued from Page Three)

drop-off and handicapped area in the existing parking area at Pillar Point.

9. No fishing or gathering will be allowed on the reef.

10. No picnicking will be allowed on the beach.

11. Horseback riding, bicycling, and dog walking will be permitted only on the California Coastal Trail.

12. County Ordinances relative to the operation of County Parks shall apply to activities within the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Pillar Point Marsh.

a. Motorized off-road vehicles are banned.

b. Motor vehicles shall be restricted to designated parking areas and paved roads.

c. Park rules, including hours of operation, shall be available at the entrance, at the Education Center, at the Pillar Point Marsh and on maps and brochures. Visitors are responsible for knowing the rules.

d. Alcoholic beverages shall not be permitted within the Reserve.

e. Smoking will be permitted only in designated areas.

f. Fireworks shall not be permitted.

g. Special events may be held through the Parks and Recreation event process.

13. Because the Reserve has no fire suppression capability, other fire control agencies will continue to be relied upon to provide that service.

14. Accommodations shall be made for disabled persons at selected areas and sites within the Reserve.

Uses and Facilities Program

1. Uses and activities will be consistent with the missions of the Reserve, to preserve and enhance natural resources, and to provide educational opportunities.

2. Physical improvements will be adequate to accommodate education and interpretive uses, management activities and visitor services commensurate with Master Plan goals and policies.

Facilities developed to accommodate these uses will include an Education Center to be built at the site of the existing Moss Reach visitor's center, near the Moss Beach Reef, and parking, picnic and restroom facilities near the Pillar Point Marsh. The existing trails network will be

improved and will connect facilities at the north and south end of the Reserve.

At the present time, organizations are commenting on the Master Plan before it is finalized.

Mid-Peninsula Open Space District Gets Alma College Property

Preservation of the 1,100-acre former Alma College property has been a goal of local and regional environmental groups for over two decades, based on the land's unique character, abundant second-growth redwoods, wildlife habitat, mixed forests, and proximity to the urbanized South Bay. Finally a partnership between the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District and Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) has enabled the permanent preservation of this priceless natural resource. Earlier this year, the District approved a \$10 million payment to the owners of the property for a 9-year lease and purchase option arrangement for the land. In June, the District Board decided to contribute an additional \$5 million, and POST agreed to borrow funds to contribute \$10 million to the deal, thus covering the entire cost of the purchase. The District now owns title to a 260-acre portion with POST owning the remaining 805 acres. The District is continuing to aggressively pursue \$5 million in state or other grant funds that will offset some of POST's borrowed contribution, and POST is working to obtain \$5 million in private donations to complete the \$10 million funding gap.

There is currently no public access as unusable buildings and other hazards have to be cleared. When ready, this will be known as the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve.

Judge Halts Federal Timber Sales

Last August federal Judge William Dwyer put a hold on 34 timber sales in spotted owl forests in Washington, Oregon and northern California.

The Judge who had precipitated the events leading to the White House's 1994 Northwest Forest Plan acted on a complaint by 13 environmental groups.

He said that the economic consequences to timber buyers of his current hold-down "are likely to be temporary and

minor," while the potential environmental damage the sales could cause "is generally held to be irreparable."

That view was reinforced by Andy Stahl of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, who pointed out that 750 million board feet of uncut timber remain unaffected by the judge's ruling.

The Dwyer decision could affect 225 million board feet of timber. Cutting on some sales had already begun.

At issue was implementation of the White House's Option Nine, growing out of an unprecedented conference chaired by President Clinton in Portland in 1993. The plan scaled back timber sales by 80% and called for conducting surveys for scores of rare species before ground disturbing activities such as logging and road-building could begin:

But years later, and after Congress had cut the budget for such scientific research, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management issued memos to field staffs changing the survey rules.

Environmental groups went back to court in July, 1998 and the agencies promised to consult with the plaintiffs about ground-disturbing activities. Nevertheless, the government awarded several contracts and cutting had begun on ten of the sales by the time Dwyer ruled on the request for a preliminary injunction.

One of the reasons claimed by the White House for failing to adhere to the agreement was that pro-logging forces in Congress worked to make sure that money was budgeted for timber sales but kept to a minimum for specialists needed to "survey and manage" rare species.

The GM Tree

Shell and Monsanto are reportedly developing a new tree that will not provide food, flowers, pollen or fruit and will not be able to reproduce itself. Instead, the companies claim the so-called GM tree will be the perfect timber producer and will be arrayed in fast-growing, bug-proof stands — relieving pressure on natural forests.

Nevertheless some environmental groups are expressing their intention to oppose establishment of these tree farms. Some, because Shell and Monsanto are traditional enemies; others because of the Frankenstein factor — the fear of genetically engineered products.

The 1999 Christmas Counts

RETURNING COMPILER — AL DE MARTINI

Sequoia Audubon Will Hold Two Christmas Bird Counts

CRYSTAL SPRINGS

AÑO NUEVO

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1999 SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2000

For more than a hundred years Audubon members have censused wintering birds across the United States and beyond. We are blessed with a very productive area in which to count and, usually, with clement weather. Our participants find enough species for us to rank both of our counts in the top dozen or so in the nation.

The Crystal Springs Count will be followed by a compilation dinner at the San Mateo Garden Center where a warm and tasty meal will be waiting and where you can share your findings with the other birders.

We are very lucky to have Al DeMartini back as compiler. His expertise and experience are invaluable.

EVERYONE is needed to make the counts a success, so join the fun at the Sequoia Audubon Christmas Counts.

Call our office (650) 345-3724 or e-mail RWinslowS@aol.com for more info.

Registration Form

I would like to participate in:

- ☐ The Crystal Springs Count (\$5) — December 18, 1999
- ☐ The Año Nuevo Count (\$5) — January 2, 2000
- ☐ I am willing to serve as an area leader.
- ☐ I will monitor and report on my feeder or back yard on:
December 18 _____ January 2 _____
- ☐ I will be at the compilation dinner on
December 18 (\$5) at the San Mateo Garden Center.
January 2 (\$5) — Location to be announced

Please cut out or copy and send with your check to:

1999 Christmas Counts

I would prefer to count in the following areas or under the following special conditions:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ e-mail: _____

Christmas Counts, Sequoia Audubon Society
30 West 39th Avenue, Suite 202
San Mateo, CA 94403

The Bluebird Journal

Howard Rathlesberger

San Mateo County Coordinator

The response to our appeal for help was gratifying. Robin Smith suggested organizing teams for monitoring the larger trails and we're organizing one for the new Sharon Heights Golf Course trail.

We have a three person team for a new trail at Filoli. They are Auduboners and Friends of Filoli — Hans Arps, Sally Boyd, and Sue Carder.

At Sunset Gardens, Terry Tiemken, the Production Manager of the magazine, is our monitor.

The sixth grade class project at Woodside Elementary School has been expanded to include three third grades. This guarantees that the project will be ongoing, so there'll be some continuity through, at least, fifth grade. The Woodside town hall and library boxes will also be taken over by them.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is communicating with the many backyard birders who have one or two boxes. It would be great to be able to accumulate their results by species of cavity nesters and successes.

An interesting video, *Birds That Nest In Boxes*, is available for rent at the Wild Bird Center in San Carlos. It emphasizes the need to help cavity nesters.

Rats Prey on Bluebirds

According to *Bluebirds Fly!*, the newsletter of the California Bluebird Recovery Program, a number of blue bird box trails in California, Texas and Oklahoma have been invaded by rats this past year.

Although wood rats have been found sheltering in nestboxes, they are largely vegetarian so black rats are the principal suspects. The 1 7/16" entrance hole to the nestbox is probably too small for the larger Norway rats. Nevertheless, rats are notorious for their ability to squeeze into small spaces and smaller individuals among the Norway rats have probably wreaked their share of the destruction.

Fatal Duel

Last October biologists on the Farallon Islands witnessed an unusual death by drowning of two peregrine falcons.

During combat over a mourning dove the falcons drifted out over the ocean. During the scuffle, one bird fell into the water, extricated itself from the surf, and flew out of sight behind a rock. Minutes later, the peregrine was seen floundering in the water, obviously in trouble. Peter Pyle of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory launched a rescue boat, but by the time he and US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Joelle Buffa reached it, the falcon was dead.

About 15 minutes later, the second bird was found floating on the ocean, also drowned. Both birds were retrieved. Both were adult males, one of the race anatum

the improvement, wetland restoration efforts deserve a good share of the credit. For the fourth time in five years, we enjoyed record duck populations, but the need for continued habitat conservation has not diminished."

Green-winged teal, shovelers, wigeons, pintails, and mallards all are expected in greater numbers this season. Green-winged Teal, up 36 percent from 1998 and a whopping 66 percent greater than the long-term average, are the big winners.. Shovelers and wigeons are up 22 and 4 percent, respectively, but Gadwalls are off 14 percent.

Although pintails increased by 21 percent this year, the species is still the only dabbling duck that remains below (minus 30 percent) their long-term average. Pond counts in the prairie pothole were low as more than a million breeding pintails overflowed the prairies, and nested in Alaska, a less productive area.

Mallards are up 17 percent from last year. They have not been this numerous nationally since 1955. However, most of California's mallards are local residents and there is no recent state data on their breeding success.

"Lerps" Anyone?

Birds in the coastal regions of California exploit eucalyptus trees for nectar, particularly in winter. Searching groves of flowering eucalyptus has become modus operandi on Christmas Bird Counts, with the rewards often being good counts of over-wintering hummingbirds, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks, and wood warblers. Given that eucalyptus are among the dominant trees in many urban and suburban regions of California, it is hard to imagine birding in the region before the establishment of these exotic trees.

An insect pest is affecting, in some cases, decimating eucalyptus trees in southern California. The larvae of the Red Gum Psyllid, *Glycaspis brimblecombeise* excrete a small conical "lerp", sticky, sugary honeydew that encapsulates the larva. An affected eucalyptus is easy to spot because of the sticky lerps on the leaves, a virtual rain of sticky honeydew from the tree, and lots of dead leaves. Infestations grow fastest in the warmer months, and

(Continued on Page Seven)

Would you like to spend more time outdoors?

Audubon Canyon Ranch

invites you to become a weekend volunteer.
Learn about the birds, plants and freshwater pond
critters at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve.

Training classes are six Saturdays from January
22 through February 26, 10 AM to 4 PM.

Call now! 415-868-9244

and the other of the race pealei; one bird having been banded on August 29 at Hawk Hill. Biologist Pyle noted that peregrines winter, but do not breed, on the Farallon Islands.

Duck Populations Up 14-35%

Green-Winged Teals Abundant

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is predicting duck populations will increase by 14 percent over last year. The duck population, estimated at 105 million, is 35 percent greater than the long-term average and the most birds in over 50 years.

The significant upswing is due to generally improved habitat conditions in key nesting area of Canada, Alaska, and the plains states, where the number of wetlands increased by 46 percent.

John Rogers, acting director of Fish and Wildlife, maintains, "While improved habitat and weather had much to do with

Lerps

(Continued from Page Six)

are exacerbated by drought and other stresses. Some trees cannot survive the onslaught.

There are entire guilds of birds in Australasia, especially honeyeaters and pardalotes, that eat these lerps. It will be very interesting to see if our native birds will exploit this potentially abundant food source.

Those who bird in a favorite park or other site with eucalyptus trees should pay attention to this phenomenon. Should this infestation result in widespread loss of large numbers of eucalyptus trees, the ramifications for over-wintering hummingbirds, orioles, tanagers, and wood-warblers are potentially severe. These things are hard to monitor so birders this winter should pay close attention to bird numbers in affected areas.

Condensed from an e-mail posting on BIRDWEST by Kimball Garrett, Ornithology Collections Manager, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles County.

Hey, Now Wait a Minute!

Cliff Richer

Kimball Garrett, the author of the above is an industrial strength birder, an acknowledged expert in bird distribution and identification, a member of the Rare Bird Committee and, based on a couple of times I've met him, a hell of a nice guy. But he's wrong on this one.

Eucalyptus trees may be good for birders, but they're not essential to California's bird populations, and if you can believe Rich Stallcup and Dave Shuford, two birders with credentials equal to Garrett's, may even be harmful.

Although as many as 60 species of eucalyptus have become naturalized in this state, it is the blue gum eucalyptus that has become one of our most serious and pernicious alien invaders. It flowers sporadically, sometimes going years between flowering periods. Except for these

sporadic flowering periods it has a totally negative impact on our native wildlife, displacing native habitat on which many creatures depend for food and shelter, while providing none of the first and little of the latter.

When it does flower, its strong odors attract pollinating insects, which in turn attract birds. Hummingbirds are also attracted to the flowers. But the eucalyptus also gives off a thick, sticky liquid which can turn into a black tar-like substance. Stallcup and Shuford have documented a



number of cases in which this tar sealed the nostrils and bills of hummingbirds and warblers, causing them to die from starvation and exhaustion.

In summary, I'm cheering for the lerps and, should they eradicate or thin our eucalyptus, anticipate that our birds will be far better off living with the native species that take their place.

Go, lerps, go!

And Yet Another Count

The 2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will take place February 19th - 22nd, 2000. Organized by

National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Count is sponsored this year, in part, by Wild Birds Unlimited and Ford Motor Company. The goal is to have at least one million of the 50 to 60 million North Americans who watch birds contribute data. The count is reported on individually by counters with computers who send their data directly to the Cornell lab. **Sequoia will provide computer access for those of you who want to participate but are Intel-impaired. Send us your lists and we will submit them.**

As the event evolved last February, its educational potential was recognized. Fourteen thousand citizen-scientists studied their backyards last February. This year, in addition to individuals and families, it is hoped that classrooms across the continent — at least 50 thousand — will become involved.

The GBBC offers the classroom teacher the opportunity to teach environmental literacy through an inquiry-based science activity and state-of-the-art technology. National Audubon will provide instructional materials for the classes and suggest additional related activities.

The data collected this year will allow ornithologists to begin to look for trends and population shifts, and enable assessment of the impacts of unique weather patterns. **FOR MORE INFO., CONTACT:** Sally Conyne, Dir., NAS Citizen Science; Rushland, PA 18956;

e-mail: <sconyne@audubon.org>
OR Cornell Lab, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd.; Ithaca, NY 14850;
1-800-843-BIRD
OR Alicia Craig-Lich, Wild Birds Unlimited; 1-888-302-2473, or 317-571-7100;
e-mail: <craiglicha@wbu.com>.

Inland Cormorants

Dave Shuford of Point Reyes Bird Observatory is collecting reports of inland nesting sites for Double-crested Cormorants; please phone any reports to 415-868-1221, extension 14.

Potluck Time

Bring your own utensils and plates and a bag in which to take them home. Those people whose last name begins with the letters **A-F** should bring **CASSEROLES or other hot dishes**; those whose names begin with the letters **G-L**, a **DESSERT**; and **M through Z** should provide a **SALAD**. Be sure your offering will feed at least 5 people.
The Potluck Dinner begins at 6:30 PM on Thursday, December 9, at the San Mateo Garden Center on the Alameda at Parkside and will be followed immediately by the business meeting and the program.

Numbers to Remember

SAS office FAX – 345-3748

e-mail

The Sequoia Office – sasoffice@neteze.com

The *Needles* Editor – ulticoot@cs.com

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