

SEQUOIA NEEDLES

*Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County
Founded 1949*

*Volume 53, No. 3
February-March 2003*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The Fun Things

BY MARTHA O'NEAL MACHO

We are fortunate to have a geographical area of such diversity that we can bird a coastline, a bay, marshes, woodlands, lakes, and fields. As our Christmas Bird Counts demonstrate from year to year, we can set off on a local birding expedition and be fairly assured of a generous number of species - residents and regular migrants as well as rarities. Many of us also go out of the county, to bird areas in the region and in other countries.

We recognize both the local scene and the wider world in our monthly meetings and our sponsored field trips. Elkhorn Slough and Pescadero Marsh on the Coast, Coyote Point, Sea Cloud Park, Palo Alto Baylands and Bair Island on the Bay, Edgewood Park, the Filoli Estate, and Jasper Ridge in the interior for woodlands, fields and ponds, have been some destinations for our local field trips. Yuba Pass, the Klamath Basin, Mono Lake and the Sacramento Wildlife Refuges give us some variety in scenery and birds. We also try to mention in Needles non-sponsored events that have come to our attention.

In our monthly meetings, by means of photography and narrative we have gone underground with a geographic history of the Bay, experienced armchair birding in Japan, Florida, Cuba, Australia, Midway and the Galapagos Islands, among other exciting places, and explored bird biology and behavior. Our hospitality committee also serves coffee and tea and light desserts to enjoy while we catch up on the local and far-away birding adventures of our members.

These activities are very informal and can enhance your experience of birding and of our environment. I hope you have been partaking of these; if not, come join us.

SEQUOIA AUDUBON RECOGNIZED

The Committee for Green Foothills recently awarded Sequoia Audubon Society a commendation for its half-century of work in environmental education and conservation in San Mateo County. The Committee is an environmental organization based in Palo Alto with a mission "to protect and preserve the hills, forests, creeks, wetlands, and coastal lands of the San Francisco Peninsula through grassroots education, planning and legislative advocacy." The Committee celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2002 with a number of events recalling its long and shared history of activism with other local environmental groups. As part of their celebration, the Committee recognized several environmental organizations that have cooperated with them in efforts related to the protection of open space.

On August 17, 2002, at a presentation at Pescadero State Beach, Gary Deghi accepted the award "on behalf of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Sequoia Audubon volunteers who have worked over the last 50 years for the protection of birds and their habitats in San Mateo County." Choice of the award site reflects Sequoia Audubon's long history of advocacy on behalf of Pescadero Marsh. In the early 1970s, Sequoia Audubon's \$100,000 gift allowed the State to purchase the last privately-owned parcel to complete the Pescadero Marsh Natural Preserve. Sequoia Audubon also worked with the State Parks Department in developing access to the marsh with a system of trails and a docent-led interpretive program.

Sequoia Audubon was presented with a plaque honoring its many achievements over last 50 years. Sequoia Audubon was recognized for contributions to the protection of valuable natural places in San Mateo County, including Pescadero Marsh, Bair Island and Edgewood Park. Also acknowledged were initiatives to restore

(Continued on page 8)

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

(See program details on page 2)

February

Thursday, 13th, 7:30PM

Program: Thirty Years of Open Space

March

Thursday, 13th, 7:30PM

Program: Birding Chile

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details on page 3)

February

Saturday, 1st Bair Island*

Weekend, 7th-9th

Beyond Klamath Weekend

Saturday, 8th Pillar Point

Saturday, 15th San Francisco Zoo

Sunday, 23rd Edgewood Park

March

Saturday, 1st Bair Island*

Saturday, 15th

National Wildlife Anniversary

Saturday, 15th Owl Prowl

Sunday, 23rd Jasper Ridge

Spring Flowers and Birds

Saturday, 29th Hidden Villa

Sunday, 30th Edgewood Park

April

Saturday, 5th Bair Island*

Sunday, 6th Williams Sister's

Ranch Birds and Wildflowers

Sunday 13th

Elkhorn Slough, Monterey Bay Area

Saturday 26th

Filoli Estate, Woodside

Sunday 27th

Mines Road, Livermore

May

Saturday 10th

Bayfront Park, Palo Alto

Saturday 17th

San Bruno Mountain Walk

(Continued on page 3)

Sequoia Audubon Society

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*Term ending

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Members are encouraged to submit original or uncopyrighted material – articles, artwork, cartoons, photos – to be published in the Needles. The deadline for the submission of materials is the first day of the month preceding publication. Send comments and contributions to:

sas_editor@yahoo.com



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MEETING PROGRAMS

BY SUE COSSINS

Thirty Years of Open Space:

Parklands of Mid peninsula

Regional Open Space District

by David Weintraub and "Bay Nature"
Thursday, February 13th, 2003

David is a freelance photographer whose photos have appeared in such publications as "Audubon", "Forbes", "Smithsonian" and "Sunset". His photos have also appeared in such books as "San Francisco: The City's Sights and Secrets" (Chronicle Books), "The World of Shorebirds" (Sierra Club Books), and "Cape Cod on My Mind" (Falcon Publishing). In addition to photography, David is an accomplished writer whose articles about photography, travel and adventure sports have appeared in many newspapers and magazines. His first guidebook, "East Bay Trails", was published by Wilderness Press in 1998 and quickly became a best seller. He also teaches photography workshops and seminars, and for many years was an instructor of photography at City College of San Francisco and Academy of Art College. The program will also include a short presentation by the staff of "Bay Nature" magazine where David's photos have also appeared.

Birding Chile, the other California

by Alvaro Jaramillo

Thursday, March 13th, 2003

Come join local member, Alvaro Jaramillo, who is completing a field guide to the birds of Chile, to see the similarities and the differences Chile has to offer birders and naturalists. Chile is known as the long skinny country on the west coast of South America. Nowhere in the country are you too far from the ocean or the Andes, but what it lacks in longitude it makes up for in latitude. The north is tropical desert, while the far south is subantarctic. It's the equivalent of going from Baja California to Alaska, but on the other side of the globe. Central Chile is in fact very much like California in its weather, and can be strikingly similar. This is why fruits and wines are products both countries are known for. Some species, such as Sooty Shearwaters, Sanderlings, pygmy-owls,

Austral Thrushes (very much like robins) are the same species or very similar to the ones we have here. On the other hand, there are some astounding differences to the birder, from quail-like tapaculos that run about on the ground, to birds such as miners, earthreepers, rayaditos, wiretails and treerunners in the Andes and forests. Alvaro is a tour guide for Field Guide birding tours. When he is not traveling he works as a biologist with the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory.

SACRAMENTO NWR

BY JOE AND MARTHA O'NEAL MACHO

Where was our sunny weather when Saturday morning arrived? Our two-day scouting trip had been clear, with temperatures so high Thursday that we wondered why we'd brought all that cold-weather gear. But Friday night it rained just enough to cause a chilly tule fog to rise, and off we

went into the mist. The birds didn't seem to mind, so our group made the best of it. We started at the Sacramento Refuge where we could get

sparrows, pipits, pheasants and raptors in the grassland areas and ducks and geese at the viewing platform, including Ring-neck Duck and Eurasian Wigeon. Snow geese were abundant and Ross's geese were plentiful, including the blue forms for both. Sandhill Cranes, American White Pelicans and Curlews were at the Llano Seco Unit, and American Bittern at Greylodge Refuge. The "unofficial" birding areas, in fields and ponds in the farmlands east of Willows, south to Greylodge, and east to Woodruff Road near Marysville, produced some of the best experiences: line after line of airborne Snow Geese, a pond with a nice mix of waterfowl, including swans, many more swans and a few Greater Yellowlegs at Woodruff Road, plus an elusive flock of Ibis. Part of the fun in these areas was the thrill of discovery as we rounded a bend, and the quiet country roads where we could stop without any other cars. As usual, for me, the most memorable part of the trip to these wintering grounds was the sight and sound of thousands of geese rising from the water in dense flocks, then spreading out in the air with clouds of other birds in the middle and far distance.

Bair Island

Saturday, February 1, 9:00 AM

This is the time to see wintering birds at Bair Island. Bair Island is part of the Don Edwards Bay National Wildlife Refuge Complex on the San Francisco Bay. Easy walking on flat trails. We have binoculars to share. Heavy rain cancels. **Directions:** Take Hwy 101 to the Whipple Ave exit in Redwood City. Go East on Whipple across the frontage road. Meet at 9:00 AM at the refuge sign inside the gate. No restroom facilities. **Leader:** Robin Smith 650-325-3306. **Beginner/Family Trip**

Beyond Klamath Weekend

Friday - Sunday, February 7-9

Come along on this special exploratory trip to the Northeastern corner of California to the area beyond Klamath. Our precise itinerary will depend on weather conditions and bird reports, but will probably include Susanville, Honey Lake, Modoc National Wildlife Refuge and Surprise Valley. We will explore this area for wintertime birds such as Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Northern Shrike, Lapland Longspur. We will also search for rarities including Harris's and American Tree Sparrow, Bohemian Waxwing and others. The birding is sure to be fabulous. Venture out with Francis Toldi on this exciting and important winter birding area. It is a long drive so you may want to carpool and plan to leave on Thursday February 6. Reservations Required. **Leader:** Francis Toldi 650-344-1919(H) 415-925-0660(W).

Pillar Point

Saturday, February 8, 9:00 AM

This is the only sheltered harbor between Santa Cruz and San Francisco, so Pillar Point is a prime birding area. This area is a stopover point for shorebirds and a favorite for seabirds. Not only does the harbor usually have one or two surprises, but the nearby willows, cypresses, and grassland have proven to be first-rate area for warblers and sparrows.

Directions: Take Hwy 92 to Hwy 1; follow Hwy 1 north to Capistrano Rd. and turn Left at the lights. Turn left at the

first opportunity and we will meet in the parking lot at the east end of the harbor near the boat launch ramp. This will be a walking trip along the beach and rocky areas, so boots and sturdy shoes are recommended. Wear clothing in layers for cold and windy to sunny weather.

Leader: Gary Deghi 650-726-1340

International Birding Trip!

Saturday, February 15, 10:00 AM

See birds from all continents of the world on this docent lead tour of the San Francisco Zoo. We will also bird around the zoo ground for resident species and migrants. We will learn about conservation efforts around the globe and how our conservation efforts here in the US can help migratory birds in South and Central America. **Directions:** We will meet at the zoo entrance 10:00 AM sharp. Heavy Rain/Wind cancels. \$10 entry fee.

Information: Carol Masterson 650-347-1769

Edgewood Park

Sunday, February 23, 8:00 AM

Come and talk with Lee Franks about the Bird Conservation Program at Edgewood Park. Learn how different species of birds are studied and monitored and how the information is used for conservation management. You may even want to volunteer to help out. Meet in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area. Heavy rain cancels. **Directions:** The Edgewood Park entrance is East of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City.

Leader: Lee Franks

Bair Island

Saturday, March 1, 9:00 AM

Come see the last winter birds and the arriving spring birds at Bair Island. Ducks, water birds, shore birds, sea birds, and Hawks are all possible on this trip. If you are new to birding this is the trip for you. Walking is easy and suitable for kids in strollers. We have binoculars to share.

Directions: Take Hwy 101 to Whipple Ave. exit in Redwood City. Go East on Whipple across the frontage road. Meet at 09:00 AM at the refuge sign inside the gate. No restroom facilities. **Leader:** Robin Smith 650-325-3306 **Beginner/Family Trip**

Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

June

Saturday 21st

Burrowing Owls, Mountain View

Weekend 7th-8th Yuba Pass

*Beginner/Family Trip

Check the field trip descriptions for any special information or requirements. Late comers may be disappointed. For all field trips bring your binoculars, water, wear sturdy walking shoes or boots, sun block, hat, and always dress in layers for hot sunny weather to cool windy conditions. While we will attempt to stay on schedule, circumstances may dictate changes to field trip leaders, dates or times. For the latest schedule and updates always go to the Sequoia Audubon web site, contact the trip leader, or call

Carol at 650-347-1769

Half Moon Bay Volunteers

Half Moon Bay State Beach is seeking volunteers to assist with the Plover Watch program. Volunteers observe the threatened western snowy plover along a designated nesting habitat, record observations, and educate the public visiting the beach about the bird. New volunteers attend a one-day training workshop on either Saturday March 8th or Saturday March 22. Volunteers work at least four hours per month during the nesting season from March to September. For information please contact Nelle Lyons at (650)726-8819 or hmbplovers@hotmail.com.

Peregrine Falcon Survey

In an effort to quantify the level of recovery of the peregrine falcon population in California and renew baseline studies on an annual, statewide basis, the UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) plans a survey for spring 2003. They are requesting the help of people who know of peregrine nest sites, and who are willing to make at least two visits to the sites this spring. For information please visit <http://www.scpbrg.org/>

(Continued from page 3)

Centennial Anniversary of National Wildlife Refuge System Saturday, March 15

In 1903, Teddy Roosevelt, an avid birder, created the first National Wildlife Refuge to protect migratory waterbirds and their habitats. Now there are refuges throughout the US along all migratory routes that help protect and manage wildlife. Come and visit one of the newer parts of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and learn about bird conservation and Sequoia Audubon's work to preserve this important birding area. **Directions:** Exit Hwy 101 at Whipple Ave. in Redwood City. Go east on Whipple across the frontage road. Meet at 09:00 AM at the refuge sign inside the gate. No restroom facilities.

Contact: Robin Smith 650-325-3306

Owl Prowl

Saturday, March 15, 4:00am to Dawn

Wake up early and join us for an Owl Prowl. We will be listening for Owls along the coast in the early morning hours when the Owls will be active. Reservations (and an alarm clock) are required.

Leader: Francis Toldi 650-344-1919(H) 415-925-0660(W)

Jasper Ridge Spring Flowers and Birds

Sunday, March 23, 8:00 AM

The field trip to Jasper Ridge should coincide with the height of the spring bird migration and peak of the wildflower displays. Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve is a private biological reserve. It is managed as a perpetual resource by Stanford University for research and advanced teaching. This tour has been arranged by the docents of Jasper Ridge. A \$5.00 preserve fee is charged (sorry no one under 14 years old). To decrease the impact to the environment we will need to carpool and stay together as a group once inside the preserve gate. Advance reservations are required.

Call: Carol Masterson at 650-347-1769.

Hidden Villa

Saturday, March 29, 09:00 AM

Spring birds are on the way. Hidden Villa is a beautiful 1600 acre preserve in the Los Altos Hills dedicated to environmental education and sustainable farming. Our leader, Garth Harwood is very knowledgeable about the birds in this unique area. Look for spring arrivals and resident birds. Depending on winter rains we may see lots of wildflowers. **Directions:** Take Hwy 280 south to El Monte, Foothill College exit. Go west to fork in the road, take the left fork on Moody Road. Follow Moody Road and watch for the Hidden Villa sign on the left. Park in the first lot on the right. Trip is not suitable for small children. **Leader:** Garth Harwood 650-879-0724.

Edgewood Park

Sunday, March 30, 8:00 AM

Come and visit this unique habitat with oak woodland, grasslands and chaparral. Spring is the best time for this beautiful San Mateo County Park. Sparrows, meadowlarks, flycatchers, bluebirds, hawks and more are all possible. Depending on the winter rains look for spring wildflowers, ferns and fungi. **Directions:** The Edgewood Park entrance is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City. Meet in the parking lot near the Day Camp area.

Leader: Lee Franks

Bair Island

Saturday, April 5, 9:00 AM

This trip is designed especially for beginners and families. Ask lots of questions. Learn about birding and conservation. We have binoculars to share. Walking is easy on well developed flat trails. **Directions:** Take Hwy 101 to the Whipple Ave. exit in Redwood City. Go East on Whipple across the frontage road. Meet at the refuge sign inside the gate. No restroom facilities. **Leader:** Robin Smith 650-325-3306 **Beginner/Family Trip**

Williams Sister's Ranch - Birds and Wildflowers

Sunday, April 6, 9:00 AM

Spring time is the best time to visit the National Audubon Williams Sister's Ranch Preserve. This is a working ranch, not currently open to the public. We will have special permission to visit this beautiful Skyline preserve. Wildflowers and birds will be in abundance. This trip should be a botanist's and ornithologist's delight. Reservations are required for this trip. **Leader:** Francis Toldi 650-433-1919 and Gloria Heller 415-925-0660

OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

(Sequoia Audubon does not sponsor the following activities)

Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

February 14th-17th

Sponsored by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. Each year thousands of bird-watchers from Nome to Key West take to their back yards to count the numbers and types of birds visiting their feeders. Observations help scientists define the status of wintering birds in the US. **Information:** www.birdsource.org.

24th Annual Bald Eagle Conference, Klamath Basin

February 14th-16th

The Klamath Basin is home to over 170 species of breeding birds, wintering waterfowl and the largest concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states. There will be workshops, speakers, photo contest, art show, and field trips.

Information: 800-445-6728 or www.eaglecon.org

Salton Sea International Bird Festival, Imperial Valley

February 14th-17th

Speakers, tours and birding and nature events.

Information: <http://imperialcounty.com/birdfest>

The Centennial Anniversary, Ohlone College

March 14th-15th, 2003

Lee Stetson's play "The Tramp and the Roughrider" will be performed at the Gary Soren Smith center at Ohlone college on March 14th at 7:00 PM and on March 15th at 1:00 PM.

Information: 510-792-0222 Tuesday-Sunday 10-5

The Aleutian Goose Festival, Crescent City

March 21st-25th, 2003

Celebrate spring with virtually the entire world's population of the once nearly extinct Aleutian Canada Goose. There will be 80 different bird, nature, ocean charter trip, and heritage excursions. **Information:** 800-343-8300 or

www.redwoodlink.com/soar

FROM EDGEWOOD PARK

BY LEE FRANKS

The serpentine grasslands of Edgewood Park & Natural Preserve support the last remaining population of the threatened Bay checkerspot butterfly on the San Francisco Peninsula. The Edgewood population, which numbered in the thousands in the mid-1990's, has dropped to near extinction (only 3 adults found in 2001). The major cause of the decline, according to Stuart B. Weiss Ph.D., who has been studying the species for over twenty years, has been invasion by introduced annual grasses that choke out the larval hostplants of the butterfly.

In March 2001, Edgewood received a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant for S.B. Weiss to initiate Bay checkerspot butterfly habitat restoration studies, including an inventory of current habitat conditions, and small-scale restoration experiments using mowing and goat grazing. The results of this effort, along with a set of management recommendations for initiating long-term restoration actions, were presented by S.B. Weiss on November 12, 2002. Robin Smith and myself were among the attendees at the presentation.

Overall, the study concluded that mowing is an effective method for habitat restoration in serpentine grassland. In the experimental plots, host-plant (*Plantago*) cover increased by a factor of 3 while the invasive plant (*Lolium*) cover decreased by a factor of 3. Thus, it was recommended that a specific 34 acre serpentine plot where current habitat degradation is minimal be the focus of restoration activities - mowing, and seeding in larval host-plants - over the next several years. Upon completion of restoration, the butterfly will be reintroduced by drawing from healthy populations currently existing in the Santa Clara County.

Caterpillar and adult butterfly are the two best life-cycle stages for reintroduction because they are the easiest to collect and handle. An advantage of using caterpillar is that they would finish their development and pupate on site. An advantage of butterfly release is that it could be timed to spread risks of inclement weather. To ensure a high amount of genetic diversity and opportunity to survive a string of poor post-reintroduction years, the releases would be in the hundreds of individuals.

Since the 34 acre plot designated for restoration is also the breeding ground for Western Meadowlarks, Sequoia Audubon volunteers working on the Edgewood Bird Conservation Program will be participating in planning the restoration specifics, especially timing, to ensure minimal impact on the parks' Western Meadowlark nesting population.

THE BLUEBIRD JOURNAL

BY HOWARD RATHLESBERGER

Now is the time to check all cavity nester boxes to make sure they are fit for the new season. Scrape out old nests, and remove any wasp nests. If the inside of the box is wet, determine if the box needs repair to avoid its getting wet. If OK, open for a day or two to dry out. If bent nails are used to secure the hinged side or front, replace it with an "L" shaped screw hook.

If you have 1 1/2' entry hole boxes that have been enlarged by

woodpeckers or squirrels we can supply a 1 1/2' hole patch piece to place over the enlarged hole. Call me at 650-561-9532 (**new number**).

Clean Bluebird nests from 2002 can be saved. Raise the nest somewhat so you can scrape out the fine dusty material under the nest itself. (Don't breathe the dust!) Check the box's attachment to however it is mounted and re-secure so it will survive another season. Clean ventilation and drainage openings. When completed we should assure 2003 success.

When removing old nests, particularly of the Titmouse and Chickadee, be aware that bumblebees may have burrowed into the nest. In winter weather, they are quite dormant.

THE ARMCHAIR ACTIVIST

BY CYNTHIA McLAUGHLIN

The Sequoia Conservation Committee is reactivating the Armchair Activist program, a monthly action alert that asks you to write a letter or to make a phone call to your legislator about an environmental issue. The issue may be national, statewide or local in scope; typically, a sample letter is included as an example. There is no cost to participate and the alert can be sent to you through the U.S. Mail or via E-Mail.

Winter winds and rain are hard on bird populations, but nature can repair itself. There are winds blowing in Washington, D.C. that may produce more damage than El Niño. Now, more than ever, environmental safeguards that affect humans as well as wildlife are under attack:

- Both the Clean Air and Clear Water acts are being weakened by plans to relax air pollution regulations and lower standards for treating raw sewage, cleaning up polluted waters and protecting wetlands.
- A new National Forest Management Act is being proposed that would turn back the clock on forest protections in favor of timber interests. The new rules will remove the requirement to maintain viable populations of sensitive species and make environmental impact statements optional instead of mandatory.
- National parks are no longer sacrosanct as the Park Service recently issued a permit for gas well drilling in Padre Island National Seashore, the world's longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island and one of the last nesting areas for endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles. Situated along the Central Flyway, Padre Island is a globally important area for over 350 migratory, wintering, and resident bird species.

There is nothing more patriotic than getting involved and letting your voice be heard. Letters, especially hand-written, make a difference. In July 02, the EPA dramatically changed course and denied the request of Louisiana rice farmers to use the pesticide carbofuran. Had this pesticide been allowed, hundreds of bird species would have been at risk, including wading birds and neotropical migrant shorebirds like the Short-billed Dowitcher. During a brief comment period, the EPA received more than 3,800 letters from Audubon supporters.

If you would like to participate please send an E-Mail to Cynthia McLaughlin at texcat@earthlink.net or call 650-299-9469.

FROM AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

BY BETSY STAFFORD

Now that the winter solstice has passed, our three preserves are stirring with each extra-minute-a-day of sunlight. Sometime this month Great Blue Herons will return to check out their nesting sites atop the redwoods and firs of Bolinas Lagoon Preserve. Late winter rains are finally bringing the deer, bobcat, and grey fox back to our streams and meadows full of running water and juicy green grass. A new crop of docents is graduating soon from 21 Wednesdays of training classes. And our Ranch Guides and Weekend Hosts are calendaring weekend days to join us during our 2003 Public Season.

Last year 138 of you wonderful volunteers from our Bay Area Audubon Chapters gave 897 hours helping to meet and greet the weekend visitors to our heronry at Bolinas Lagoon. We hope you enjoyed getting to know some of our entertaining Great Blues, Great Egrets, and Snowies; we certainly enjoyed getting to know you better, and hope that you will return - or come for your first

day of hosting - during this coming public season, March 15 - July 13. Please sign up with your Chapter representative - Francis Toldi or Rick Baird. Visit us at our beautiful, newly revised website at <<http://www.egret.org>>.

Spring 2003 Birdseed Sale is Rescheduled

Our longtime birdseed supplier is no longer able to deliver seed to us. Wild Bird Center in San Carlos has kindly offered to help us by supplying the seed for our sale. There will be no change in our method of distribution, and buyers may still choose the delivery city nearest to them. Because of the disruption caused by the delivery problem, we are changing the date that orders must be received from January to February.

Our thanks to Wild Bird Center for their assistance.



Spring 2003 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

All Orders With Payment Must Be Received By Tuesday, February 11, 2003

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation programs



Check Preferred pickup location below:

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

		Number of Bags	Cost in \$
AUDUBON WILD BIRD MIX <i>red & white millet plus black oil sunflower</i>	20 lb @ \$11.00/bag		
Red/White Millet Mix	20 lb@ \$11.00/bag		
Black Oil Sunflower.	25 lb@ \$12.50/bag		
White Proso Millet	25 lb@ \$11.00/bag		
Thistle	5 lb@ \$8.00/bag		
Thistle	20 lb@ \$30.00		
Sunflower Chips	25 lb@ \$26.00/bag		
Total birdseed purchases (sales tax is included in all prices above)			
Tax-deductible contribution to Sequoia Audubon Society (Thank You!)			
Amount of enclosed check (payable to Sequoia Audubon Society)			

Mail check and order to:

Sequoia Audubon Society

P.O. Box 755, Millbrae, CA 94030-0755 (650) 349-1555 (Iona Luke)

Email: Moneal2000@AOL.com

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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Research and Resource Management

Our annual publication of "The Ardeid" is out, and it's a beauty, full of fine research and reports on "Invasive Spartina," "Acorns and Ecosystems," "Raven Predation in Heronries," and "Sudden Oak Death." This exceptional publication, edited by our Cypress Grove Preserve Biologist, Dr. John Kelly, is offered each year to our field observers, volunteers, and supporters of the ACR Research and Resource Management Program. To receive a copy, please call Cypress Grove Preserve, 415-663-8203. Subscriptions are available free of charge; however, contributions are gratefully accepted.

Some dates to start the New Year right

Workday (and free lunch!) at Bolinas Lagoon Preserve - Sunday, March 2 Call 415-868-9244.

Workday (and free lunch!) at Bouverie Preserve - Saturday, March 8. Call 707-938-4554.

Our popular Guided Nature Walks at Bouverie Preserve - January 11 and 25, February 8, March 22, April 5 and 19, and May 10 and 17. Come see where the elusive Blue Grouse were sighted, and where clouds of wildflowers are painted on the meadows and trails. Lucky hikers are chosen by lottery. Form must be returned one month prior to the walk. Call 707-938-4554 for a lottery form.

HUNTING FOR CLAPPER RAILS

BY ROBIN SMITH

The US Fish and Wildlife Service conducts rail surveys every winter at the highest tides of the year. During previous winters I have participated on foot, at the Palo Alto Baylands, in surveys carried out by volunteers from the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. This season I had a chance to go on the airboat with the Fish and Wildlife personnel. Here's how it went.

Joy Albertson and Joelle Buffa from the refuge were the captains and knowledgeable and proficient they were. We met at the refuge headquarters, in the dark, and got "suited up". That means lots of warm clothes, hip boots that made me feel like Puss in Boots, a bright red float coat (designed to keep you afloat if you should be unfortunate enough to take an unplanned swim), ear plugs and ear muffs. We then proceeded, pulling the airboats on trailers, to the launch ramp in Palo Alto.

The launch ramp is actually a muddy spot between two posts where a cable can be undone and the boat trailer backed into the rising tide. A quick maneuver backwards and forwards by the truck floats the boats into the channel. Airboats are very noisy so we all put our ear plugs in and ear muffs on and scrambled aboard. We proceeded right over the marsh, which was totally underwater.

The airboats have no keel and no reverse. They tend to ride

right over anything floating in the water. This was an interesting feeling for me because it is just what you don't do in a sailboat or river raft! Dead snags, not to worry. Floating telephone poles - no sweat, just go right over them. Bushes? Ha! No way they can get caught in the prop! But, do keep an eye out for duck hunters.

The rails tend to hunker down in the small bushes still showing above water. The boat circles around and the observers watch for birds or quivering leaves. Finally the rails will flush and can be counted. We saw many Clapper rails and Sora, but no Virginia or Black rails. As you can guess, a Black rail sighting would be followed by a lot of hooting and hollering. Predators are noted in the survey areas, too.

The actual survey time is about an hour on each side of high tide. If whitecaps develop on the bay, it's time to head back to the launch ramp. Airboats do not do well in waves or in big swells but are great for salt marshes.

I really enjoyed taking part in the rail surveys. It was rewarding to see the large numbers of rails in areas where they had been dwindling. Now, if only the hip boots came in red leather, I could really look like Puss in Boots.

THE ULTIMATE COOT

BY CLIFF RICHER

If it ain't True it ought to be...

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker is generally assumed to be extinct, with the last verified sighting dating all the way back to 1938, when two pairs were known to be nesting in a Louisiana forest owned by the Singer sewing machine company. However Singer sold its land to a lumber company in the early 40's and the Singer tract was cut clear, its cypress trees ending up as landing craft

that eventually came ashore in Normandy and Okinawa.

Nevertheless, there are reports of Ivory-bill sightings almost every year. Unfortunately none of these has been proven true by subsequent investigators.

One of the latest of these sightings came from a group of birders searching for the bird in Louisiana. None of them saw an Ivory-bill, but the group did hear an unfamiliar call which they recorded. They then played the tape back over a cell phone to an environmental scientist in Florida, who immediately declared it to be an Ivory-billed. Thus fortified by this affirmation the group reported their finding, setting off the usual frantic influx of birders searching for the ultimate lifetime bird. Sometime later, the scientist's boss, a well-known ornithologist, heard of this and asked her how, she, a non-birder, had been so positive about the identification. The scientist, who also fancies herself to be an animal communicator and psychic responded, "It told me."

The person relating this story to me found herself promoted and was immediately assigned most of the scientist's workload, thereby assumedly freeing the psychic so she could receive messages from any stray Eskimo Curlews or Passenger Pigeons.

Christmas Bird Count Results

We plan to print the Christmas Bird Count results in the April issue of Needles. To get the results sooner, please try our website.

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Photo by Cait Humik

SEQUOIA AUDUBON RECOGNIZED

Photo: Gary Deghi (right) accepts award for Sequoia Audubon

(Continued from page 1)

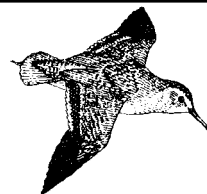
and protect SF Bay; management efforts on behalf of endangered species throughout the county; the education and interpretation of the natural treasures of San Mateo County through more than 50 years of field trips; and collaborative work with other environmental organizations, ranging from advocacy of the

Conservation Committee is reactivating conservation alerts!!

See "The Armchair Activist" on page 5.

Coastal Act in 1972 to the sponsoring of recent informational workshops related to coastsides development. Sequoia Audubon was also commended for two significant printed works: "San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching", an informational guide to birding in San Mateo County and San Francisco, and the "2001 Breeding Bird Atlas".

Sequoia Audubon congratulates the Committee for Green Foothills on their 40 years of service protecting open space on the Peninsula.



Red Knot

THE BIRD BOX

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Mission Statement

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.