

SEQUOIA NEEDLES

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

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June-August 2005*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AUDUBON!

BY CAROL MASTERSON

National Audubon is 100 years old this year.

Bird feathers were all the rage in the early 1900s. The National Audubon Society was started to help protect birds from use of their feathers on ladies' hats and clothing. This over-use almost led to the extinction of many bird species. Since its inception, Audubon has been a leader in the conservation and environmental fronts. Audubon supported preservation of wild lands, national parks, and open spaces. It helped to protect the Bald Eagle. It acted to promote the Clean Water and Clean Air laws. It helped to push through the Endangered Species Act. For 100 years Audubon has supported protection of wildlife areas and birds in the United States and abroad.

Sequoia Audubon, the San Mateo County local chapter of National Audubon, is 56 years old this year. Sequoia Audubon has fought for protection of local and State wildlife habitats. Sequoia helped to establish Pescadero Marsh and Bair Island (now a part of the Don Edwards Bay Wildlife Refuge). We have been active in local cities to keep open spaces for birds. Over the years Sequoia Audubon completed a book on San Francisco peninsula birdwatching, developed county checklists, and wrote a

breeding bird atlas for our county. Our volunteers work on the San Mateo County coast side, bay lands, and woodlands to ensure that future generations can enjoy birds and birding.

What about the next 50 or 100 years?

What will the San Francisco Bay area look like in 50 years? Who will live here? What will their interests be? Our demographics are changing. As the population increases there will be increased pressures on our open spaces and natural areas.

How can we inspire the next generation to love nature? How can we educate our children and our children's children to learn about birds and birding and the importance of natural areas?

Sequoia Audubon needs to continue to protect important bird areas in San Mateo County and the state. We need to educate our community about the importance of conservation.

The priorities for Sequoia Audubon are to revitalize chapter administration; increase active membership in the chapter; participate in and influence conservation ethic and activities; expand community outreach

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Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

June

Thursday, 9th, Potluck and
Raffle: 6:30PM; Program: 8:00 PM
Program: Eastern Tropical Pacific
Potluck Meeting

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details on page 3)

May

Sunday, 22nd SF Aquatic Park*
Sunday, 29th Edgewood Park

June

Saturday, 4th Año Nuevo State
Reserve*
Sunday, 12th SF Aquatic Park*
Saturday, 18th Coyote Creek Field
Station*
Sunday, 19th Half Moon Bay
Snowy Plovers

July

Saturday, 16th Birding with Alvaro

August

Sunday, 7th Farallon Islands
Pelagic Trip

**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, sun block, and water; wear sturdy walking shoes or boots, hat, and always dress in layers for hot sunny weather to cool windy conditions. While we will attempt to

(Continued on page 3)



The Egrets Are Here! The Egrets Are Here!

**Be a Sequoia Audubon greeter at
the Audubon Canyon Ranch or
just come to visit.**

It's fun and it's easy.

Hours: 9:30AM to 4:00PM
June 11th and 12th
July 4th and 16th

Call Carol Masterson
650-347-1769
for more information and maps.

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Members are encouraged to submit original or uncopyrighted material – articles, artwork, cartoons, photos – for Needles. The deadline for submission 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 BARBARA WILSON

Eastern Tropical Pacific

by Sophie Webb
Thursday, June 9th, 6:30PM

Artist/biologist Sophie Webb spends several months each year on research vessels counting seabirds and marine mammals in the Eastern Tropical Pacific (Mexico south to Costa Rica and along the Hawaiian Island Chain), spending six months there in the past two years. Enjoy the pictures of the birds, marine mammals, and other critters found in that region of the ocean and learn a little about what life is like on a research vessel.

Sophie Webb has drawn and painted wildlife since childhood. She has traveled as a biologist studying and painting birds from the Amazon to the Arctic and Antarctic. In 1995 she co-authored and illustrated *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. She has written two children's books and is working on a third about dolphins in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. She is director of Oikonos: Ecosystem Knowledge and is a Research Associate of Point Reyes Bird Observatory in California.

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
Parkside Way is west of Alameda de las Pulgas, between 26th and 28th Avenues.



Masked Booby

(President's Letter, continued from page 1)
and publicity efforts; develop and implement education pertaining to birds (for adults and children); and finally develop increased fundraising capabilities and activities.

Sequoia Audubon needs to be a model for conservation in the Bay Area. We need to expand and energize our membership. We need to build on our strengths of the last 50 years to protect birds for the next 100 years. We need your help.



Photograph by Rick Baird

Cliff Richer memorial gathering, March 5, 2005, at San Pedro Valley County Park. Pictured are Cliff's daughters and grandchildren. The spotting scope and tripod were donated by SAS to the park volunteers in his memory.



FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

San Francisco Aquatic Park

Sunday, May 22, 9:30 AM

Join National Park Service Ranger Carol Kiser on this beginners bird walk to see shore, migratory, citified, and resident birds as we walk along Hyde Street Pier and Aquatic Park. Bring binoculars and bird books, and dress in layers. We will meet at the Hyde Street Pier entrance at Hyde and Jefferson Streets and will go for about 1 ½ - 2 hours. There is no charge. Walk is wheelchair accessible.

Directions: Bus numbers F, 10, 30, 47, 49, and the cable car stop nearby. Call (415) 673-MUNI for details. As meter parking lasts only for one hour, parking is best at garages nearby for about \$2.50 per ½ hour at the Anchorage Shopping Center or at Ghirardelli Square.

Beginner/Family – Wheelchair Accessible

Edgewood Park – Spring Birds, Butterflies, and Flowers

Sunday, May 29, 8:00 AM

Springtime birds, butterflies, and wildflowers abound at Edgewood Park. Talk with leader Lee Franks about the important ongoing conservation studies and programs at the park. Starting at 8:00 AM sharp will increase our chances of seeing all the interesting resident and vagrant bird species.

Directions: Take Hwy 280 to Edgewood Road. Go East on Edgewood towards Redwood City and look for the park entrance and parking on the south side of the road. Meet in the paved parking lot adjacent to the Main Gate.

Leader: Lee Franks (650) 592-7733

Año Nuevo State Reserve, San Mateo County Coast

Saturday, June 4, 9:00 AM

Half-day walk with docent Paula Miller. Año Nuevo is one of the most picturesque and ecologically rich areas along the central California coast. We will look for sea birds like Sooty Shearwater, Heermann's Gull, Elegant Tern, and Marbled Murrelets. Along the beaches we might see Golden Plovers, Red Knot, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers. Land birds like Allan's Hummingbird, Swainson's Thrush, and Wilson's Warbler may be seen also. Up in the sky we may see

Rough-winged, Bank, and Cliff Swallows and if we are lucky, Black Swifts and White-throated Swifts.

Directions: Hwy 92 west to the Pacific Ocean. Turn left (south) on Hwy 1 and drive about 24 miles. Watch for the Año Nuevo signs just north of the Santa Cruz County line. There is a \$5 parking fee. Meet the leader at the south end of the parking lot. Bring your spotting scope, fluids, and lunch. Dress in layers for sun, wind, or fog.

Leader: Paula Miller (650) 773-5656

Beginner/Family Trip

San Francisco Aquatic Park

Sunday, June 12, 9:30 AM

Join National Park Service Ranger Carol Kiser on this beginners bird walk to see shore, migratory, citified, and resident birds as we walk along Hyde Street Pier and Aquatic Park. Bring binoculars and bird books, and dress in layers. We will meet at the Hyde Street Pier entrance at Hyde and Jefferson Streets and will go for about 1 ½ - 2 hours. There is no charge and walk is wheelchair accessible.

Directions: Bus numbers 10, F, 30, 47, 49, and the cable car stop nearby. Call (415) 673-MUNI for details. As meter parking lasts only for one hour, parking is best at garages nearby for about \$2.50 per ½ hour at the Anchorage Shopping Center or at Ghirardelli Square.

Beginner/Family – Wheelchair Accessible

Coyote Creek Field Station – Bird

Banding Demonstration

Saturday, June 18, 7:30 AM

Staff members of the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory will take us on a tour of the banding station to see banding in process. Come along and learn how birds are caught and banded. You may even get the chance to hold and release a banded bird!!

Reservations required: Please make reservations by phone or mail before 3 PM the Friday prior to the tour. Call SFBBO at (408) 946-6548

Beginner/Family Trip

(Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

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

Other Birding Activities

(The following activities are not sponsored by Sequoia Audubon. See details on page 5)

May-July

Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays

Audubon Canyon Ranch —
Bolinas Lagoon Preserve*

1st weekend each month

Point Reyes Bird Observatory

July

Sunday, July 10th Songbirds at
Redwood Creek

Saturday-Sunday, 30th-31st

7th Annual Hummingbird
Celebration — Weldon, CA

August

Saturday, 6th First of Fall at
Limantour Estero

*Beginner/Family Trip



Anna's Hummingbird

(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

Half Moon Bay Snowy Plovers

Sunday June 19, 9:00 AM

Join Ranger Nelle Lyons at the Half Moon Bay State Beach to learn about this important shorebird species. Each year, Nelle and her volunteers monitor and help protect the nesting Snowy Plovers at the beach. Nesting Plovers are vulnerable to predators and to increased human presence on our California beaches. Learn about Plovers and the Plover Watch program. We will also watch for other sea birds and resident shore birds. Dress in layers. Rain cancels.

Directions: Hwy 92 to the ocean. North on Hwy 1 about three miles. Watch for the Half Moon Bay State Beach signs. Tell the ranger at the gate that you are visiting for the Plover Watch program.

Leader: Nelle Lyons (650) 726-8819

Birding with Alvaro – Summertime Bird Crawl

Saturday, July 16, 8:00 AM

Join biologist Alvaro Jaramillo for this summertime bird walk. We will check the latest birding hotline reports for any possible rare birds and our birding location will be determined by where the best birds are for the day. Come prepared for driving, carpooling, walking, and some great birding.

Reservations required. Call Carol Masterson for more information at (650) 347-1769.

Tufted Puffins and the Farallon Islands Pelagic Trip

Sunday, August 7, 7:30 AM

Shearwater Journeys is offering a trip to see the Farallon Islands. The special Sequoia Audubon member's price is \$99; non-members are welcome at the regular \$115 price (both **non-refundable**). The boat, the Salty Lady, will depart from Sausalito at 7:30 AM for an 8-hour adventure to the Farallons and beyond. The Farallons are the most reliable place to view Tufted Puffins and other alcid. After visiting the Islands, weather permitting, we will continue west to the Continental Shelf to look for deep water species like Black-footed Albatross and Blue Whale. Last year's trip was outstanding and great fun. So this trip will fill up early!

Registration: Send a check for \$99.00 for each participant to Shearwater Journeys, P.O. Box 190, Hollister CA 95024, noting that you are a Sequoia Audubon member. Also include a phone number and e-mail address (if available) for each member of your party, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. For more information call trip leader Alan Hopkins (415) 644-0983 or Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS – WE NEED YOU Help Sequoia Audubon Plan for the Future

Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 9th 2005.

All members are invited to attend the Summer Planning meeting. We will brainstorm, review our goals, and plan our activities for next year. Help define the future of Audubon in San Mateo County.

Call Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769 for time and place.

QUALITY OR QUANTITY? – BIRDING IN THE ECUADORIAN ANDES, PART 3

BY FRANCIS TOLDI

January 29, 2004. While enjoying toast and coffee in the pre-dawn darkness at our Quito hotel, I looked out the window to my left, and looking back in at me from the garden was my friend, the little black rabbit that hops silently around in the hotel's inner courtyard garden. I guess it is their guard-rabbit — good to have one of those in security-conscious Quito. Xavier, who had been our driver on our Tandayapa Lodge-guided trips earlier in the trip, picked us up on time and we headed out of Quito and up to Papallacta Pass. It was a very agreeable kind of birding. Xavier is a very pleasant fellow, and although his bird knowledge was limited, he did know where all of the appropriate stops were.

We started at the radio towers above the pass. One COULD get a taxi or public bus to the pass proper, then walk up there, but at something over 4200 meters (14,000 feet) it wouldn't be an easy walk. If the road is always in the fairly good condition in which we found it, it wouldn't be hard to get a regular passenger car or taxi up there (steepness being more of an issue than ruts and bumps). Also, getting there first thing in the morning seems to be a pretty good idea, optimizing the chance for shy birds and for better weather. We were quite fortunate on both counts. The weather was clear, with only a few scattered clouds. It was cold and windy, but we were ready for that. We were the first up to the towers, and walked around a bit admiring the remarkable view of nearby volcanoes, and range after range of green ridges fading off into the distant Amazon basin. We had very clear views of nearby Antisana and a bit further away, the elegant cone of Cotopaxi, highest summit in Ecuador.

Walking about the radio towers, right on the concrete pads were two separate pairs of RUFOUS-BELLIED SEEDSNIPE. We had knockout views of these birds as they casually walked around, pecking for food. We left them there and headed down the mountain. As we were leaving, a party of boisterous sightseers arrived, and may have scared the birds off the tower pads, but I'm not sure. In any case, an early arrival would seem to be the best strategy here. We walked down the road, with Xavier slowly following us down, stopping some distance back whenever we stopped or walked off the track into the very beautiful paramo habitat. The birds were sparse, but all spectacular, and pretty easy to see. Without too much trouble we found ANDEAN TEAL (two on a tarn a bit away from the road near a small rock shelter). Allan caught a brief glimpse of a VARIABLE HAWK, but it slipped over the ridgeline before I could get a look at it. Also present were BAR-WINGED and STOUT-BILLED CINCLOSES, ANDEAN TIT-SPINETAIL (including one "family" group of about six birds), TAWNY ANTPITTA (several were running around in open view), PARAMO GROUND-TYRANT, and the ubiquitous PLUMBEOUS SIERRA-FINCH.

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CALIFORNIA THRASHER

(TOXOSTOMA REDIVIVUM)

BY LEE FRANKS

The vocal repertoires of birds are among the richest in the animal kingdom. Vocalizations convey information about the identity, location, and motivation of the singer, including ownership of territorial space. More varied song repertoires help attract females and foster superiority in vocal duels between competing males.

Vocal mimicry (one species being copied by a second species) is one way some species increase the size of their vocal repertoire. Selection has favored a large and diverse repertoire in some species. One way of increasing repertoire size and diversity is to incorporate sounds from the surrounding acoustic environment, even sounds that do not belong to the bird's own species, as well as non-avian sounds such as the barking of dogs, screeching of machinery, or human whistling. The most renowned vocal mimic is the Northern Mockingbird, but the California Thrasher, a striking and exuberant songster, is certainly a close second.

The California Thrasher is a conspicuous bird, with its long and dramatically decurved bill, the dashing style in which it runs for cover with its long tail raised, and its habit of singing almost year-round, loudly delivering rich and colorful phrases from the tops of the coyote bushes found in the chaparral sections of Edgewood Park.

Appearance: Medium-sized to large (12") songbird that is nearly twice the weight of the Northern Mockingbird and 10% heavier than the American Robin. The bird is similar to the California Towhee in overall coloration. Its upper-parts are chocolate-brown, while its under-parts are a rich buff. The chin and upper throat are pale, and there is a faint pale eyebrow. The bill and legs are black.

Behavior: Walks or hops between foraging stops on the ground. Runs swiftly, with long tail raised. Often seeks cover with a dashing run. Climbs through vegetation to gain

(Continued on page 6)

Sequoia Audubon Officers Slate for the 2005-2006 Year

President: Carol Masterson

Past President: Robin Smith

Vice President: open

Second Vice President: Howard Rathlesberger

Secretary: Norma Vite

Treasurer: Peter Grace

Board of Directors —

Terms ending 2006: Gary Deghi and Bill Critzer

Terms ending 2007: open

Terms ending 2008: Darryl Wheye and
Sue Cossins

OTHER BIRDING ACTIVITIES

(These activities are not sponsored by Sequoia Audubon.)

Audubon Canyon Ranch – Bolinas Lagoon Preserve

Saturdays, Sundays, Holidays— May 7-July 17, 10AM–4 PM
Come view the nesting herons and egrets and hike the more than 8 miles of trails. Docents are available to help teach about the birds and the beautiful nature preserve. Call (415) 868-9244 for information or go to www.egret.org

Beginner/Family Trip

7th Annual Hummingbird Celebration – Weldon, CA July 30-31

Six species of hummingbird species are possible at the Kern River Preserve between July and early September with over 1,000 hummingbirds per day. Activities include bird identification, natural history workshops, slideshows, and banding. Contact Kern Valley Nature Festivals at www.valleywild.org
Beginner/Family Trip

Point Reyes Bird Observatory

First weekend of each month, 9-11 AM

Point Reyes Bird Observatory offers a 2-hour birding trip to a PRBO's research location or other habitat in the North Bay. Meet PRBO's biologists, learn about regional birds and habitats, and discover some of the birding hotspots!

Walks are free to PRBO members and cost \$10 per person for non-members. For more information regarding walks, times, or directions, please contact Sue Abbott by email or by phone at (415) 868-1221, ext 302 or fax (415) 868-1946. Sign-ups are not necessary, but please let Sue know if you are bringing a group of five or more. You can become a member of PRBO at the bird walk (individuals \$40; family \$55).

Look on the web site for more info -- www.prbo.org

Songbirds at Redwood Creek

Sunday, July 10, 9:00 AM

Join Point Reyes Bird Observatory biologists as they explore this riparian habitat, check mist-nets for songbirds, and observe biologists band and release songbirds. Keep your eyes and ears out for signs of nesting, and discuss how and why we monitor nesting songbirds. Find out why songbirds sing and other fascinating tidbits about their lives! Meet at the Muir Beach parking lot at 9:00 AM to caravan over to the research site on a well-maintained dirt road.

First of Fall at Limantour Estero

Saturday, August 6, 9:00 AM

This is a fun walk to learn about and observe fall's first migrants, including phalaropes. Learn about the critical role that wetlands play in the lives of waterbirds, and why so many of these birds are migratory superheroes. We'll likely see adult and young Caspian Tern, Elegant Tern, Heermann's Gull, and Brown Pelican. Meet at the Limantour parking lot. Check out our bird list from this walk in 2003 on the internet at www.prbo.org.

(California Thrasher, continued from page 5)

an elevated song perch, or access a nest. Eats insects and other arthropods such as beetles, spiders, and crickets. Thrashers locate prey by digging vigorously with their long bills in leaf litter and in soft ground beneath cover. When they eat plant food it is usually poison oak and toyon. Mated individuals often feed on the ground near each other, as do parents and dependent young.

The California Thrasher is strongly territorial. Both male and female defend territories. Territory borders are often disputed with neighbors. Strong antagonistic interactions occur between this thrasher and Western Scrub-Jays, which are potential nest predators.

Sounds: The California Thrasher commonly mimics a wide range of avian species that share its habitat, as well as frogs, coyotes, and a postman's whistle. They loudly deliver their repertoires from elevated perches, allowing as many as eight neighboring territorial thrashers to be heard at the same time in the dense chaparral canyon on the south side of the Clarkia Trail (upper section).

The female also sings, "loudly and sweetly", and a mated pair may counter-sing for extended periods. Male and female songs appear the same in quality, content, and volume. This thrasher sings year-round, but with varied vigor and intensity through the seasons. Songs are heard more or less continuously throughout the November-to-June period, and with declining frequency after breeding through the summer. They are quietest in late summer (molting period), but singing frequency increases around mid-August, corresponding to completion of molt. Singing further increases in frequency in the fall, and becomes more extended and vigorous after the first rains of the season (mid-late November).

Breeding: The California Thrasher's breeding season is of extended duration (February - June). They typically lay a first clutch (generally 3-4 eggs) in February or March. Their second brood follows immediately after the first, with the female laying a second clutch while the male is still feeding the dependent young of the first brood.

Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs, and brood the young. The young depart the nest at 12-14 days old, with well-developed legs enabling them to run, but with notably short wings and flight feathers only about half grown. The last 30% of their adult weight is gained out of the nest. The young birds remain in parental territories for 3-4 months.

References

Cody, Martin L. The Birds of North America, No 323, 1998

Gill, Frank B. Ornithology, 1990



Photograph by Don Desjardin

California Thrasher

GODWIT DAYS

APRIL 15-17

BY SUE COSSINS

Martha O'Neal and I drove to Arcata to attend Godwit Days. Neither of us had been there before. What a great area for birding! There are a great many habitats within a short distance. We stopped at a few places on our way to the community center since the first day was warm and sunny. At the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Eureka we were treated to good looks at Barn and Cliff Swallows flying around the marsh. At one point the swallows mobbed a Sharp-shinned Hawk as it flew by and chased it into a tree. The Marsh Wrens were singing atop the reeds and there were lots of Yellow-rumped Warblers in the willows. Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Bufflehead and Canada Geese pairs with goslings were in the ponds. Another stop at the breakwater was a good place to see Common Loon in alternate plumage.

Our last birding stop of the day was the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary where the tidal mudflats were rich with shorebirds.

The four-day birding festival offered many field trips. We decided to take the tour of the BLM Headwaters Forest Reserve on Saturday. The trail follows the Elk River through a second and third growth redwood forest. Birds weren't abundant, probably due to the rain and afternoon hours, but occasionally we heard calls of the Pacific Slope Flycatcher and Wilson's Warbler.

Even though Arcata is a long way north of the Bay Area, it's a pleasant drive along highway 101. Actually, we heard and saw one of the most interesting birds of the trip at a rest stop along the way – Cassin's Vireo.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

BY CAROL MASTERSON

Want to help the birds? Get involved? There are still many opportunities to volunteer for important Sequoia Audubon programs and projects. Sequoia Audubon is an **all-volunteer** organization and we need your help. Many jobs are ones that you can do at home and that take only a few hours a month. Details on these jobs and others available on the SAS website.

Assistant Membership Coordinator

Time: Varies by time of year; approximately 8-10 hours a month at your convenience.

Location: Your personal computer at home. Email access is a requirement of this position.

Contact: Bill Critzer, Membership Chair, (650) 234-1136

Pescadero Marsh Docent and State Park Volunteer

Requirements: Interest in helping to preserve a beautiful marsh on the Pacific Flyway and help others learn about the wildlife and birds at the marsh. Ability to attend training class.

Location: Pescadero Marsh on the San Mateo County coast.

Time: A few hours each week.

Contact: Sue Cossins (650) 347-3958 or Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769

Bluebird Box Monitor

Requirements: An interest in helping the recovery of Bluebird populations in San Mateo County. Willingness to learn about care of nest boxes.

Location: At nest box sites. At your house or locations in San Mateo County

Time: Monitor nest boxes one day a week on your schedule. (15 minutes to 1 hour +)

Contact: Howard Rathlesberger (650) 561-9532

Field Trip Leader

Requirements: Love of birds and birding, and a willingness to share your birding knowledge.

Time: 3 - 4 hours each walk

Location: In the field

Contact: Carol Masterson (650) 347 - 1769

Community outreach/Education Coordinator

Requirements: Enthusiasm for sharing your love and knowledge of birding and SAS.

Time: 3 - 4 Hours per month.

Location: Various community locations, may include schools, parks, senior centers, and birding events.

Contact: Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769

Bird Surveyor

Requirements: Good pair of binoculars and "morning" mentality.

Time: Conduct one 3.5-hour bird survey a week/month (flexible)

Location: Edgewood Park & Preserve, San Carlos.

Contact: Lee Franks funseekers2@juno.com (650) 592 - 7733

(Quality or Quantity, continued from page 4)

We had to work a bit harder to find MANY-STRIPED CANASTERO, but perseverance paid, and we had good looks. We also heard a number of WHITE-CHINNED THISTLETAIL, and even managed a brief, but unsatisfying, look. While chasing after the Canastero, we happened upon two small mammals. I had no idea what they were (I had come woefully unprepared for mammals). Ironically, this may have been an advantage here, because I simply noted down what we saw, without any intent to "make" it into something unusual. According to a biologist we met later in the day, our notes best described a Pudu, a very rare alpine deer. Too bad we couldn't manage a photo, or at least get to admire it longer.

From here we dropped down the east side of the pass, and after checking some windblown and bird-barren polylepis woods above the equally barren Papallacta Reservoir, we went back up the road to the Sendero del Arriero, barely two kilometers from the top of the Pass. This is a good patch of polylepis "forest" right next to the road, with some open grassland and, a few hundred meters up and over a hill, a hidden lake. I believe this is an area well described in the trip reports and birdfinding literature, but no one ever seems to use what I believe is its proper name. It is a remnant of the historical route into the Amazon basin. From prior reports, we knew that this is a hit-or-miss location—if you happen to stop when the flock that works the polylepis is around, it is an outstanding spot. Otherwise it is yet another chance to admire the abundant Great Thrushes and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Luck was with us today, and we "hit" the flock within five minutes of leaving the car. The first bird we saw in the flock was a nuthatch-like GIANT CONEBILL! Also in the flock were PEARLED TREERUNNER, WHITE-THROATED TYRANNULET, CINEROUS CONEBILL, BLACK-BACKED BUSH-TANAGER, more PLUMBEOUS SIERRA-FINCH, and HOODED SISKIN. Right at the little pass at the overlook to the lake was a reasonably cooperative GRASS (Sedge) WREN. Looking down into the pond we saw some distant duck-specks, and a closer pair of birds that proved to be ANDEAN COOT. We were quite surprised—I was not aware that they were in this particular stretch of the Andes, but we saw them well. With a scope we could have added a couple of additional species here, but this was the only time during the day that we really felt its lack.

As we made our way by the generally barren reservoir, we noted a couple of flyby YELLOW-BILLED PINTAIL. I also distinctly heard a GREATER YELLOWLEGS. Sadly, there were no gulls or other waterfowl present this day. With a couple of hours left, we dropped down to Guango Lodge for one last session at some hummingbird feeders. We paid a \$5 day fee (which included excellent coffee), and sat awhile, enjoying the feeders and admiring the lodge. I would like to stay there some time. The feeder activity included SPECKLED HUMMINGBIRD, MOUNTAIN VELVETBREAST, COLLARED INCA, two of the utterly astounding SWORD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRDS (how can

(Continued on page 8)

SAS appreciates your tax-deductible donations which help fund the Chapter's education, conservation and ongoing activities

SEND TO:

Sequoia Audubon Society

PO Box 620292

Woodside

CA 94062-0292

Name

Address

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(Quality or Quantity, continued from page 7)

such a bill BE!), TOURMALINE SUNANGEL, TYRIAN METALTAIL, LONG-TAILED SYLPH and, just before we left, WHITE-BELLIED WOODSTAR. The "honorary" hummingbird here was a MASKED FLOWERPIERCER that kept busy around the feeders, despite its non-hummingbird bill.

With that, our time was up and we drove back to Quito. In a late afternoon stroll down a busy street in Quito we stumbled upon a marvelous Andean music shop on Avenida Amazonas called Saucisa. In one of my other non-birding lives I am a musician, so I greatly enjoyed choosing from the excellent selection of Andean flutes. A little further down was a park with dozens of vendors selling woven goods. Birdwise, our daily total showed the day as a "quality over quantity" experience—a mere 32 species for the day, but of exceptional interest and beauty. Those birds, together with the unforgettable vistas of the Andes and the quiet solitude of the paramo, made for a fitting end of a wonderful trip.



THE BIRD BOX

RARE BIRD

ALERT

415-681-7422

Least Tern

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SUMMERTIME FUNDRAISER

The June 9th monthly meeting includes the election of officers and directors; please see the election slate on page 5.

The meeting will be preceded by a Potluck Dinner, Raffle, Silent Auction, and Book Sale to raise money for Sequoia Audubon. The dinner starts at 6:30 PM. Please bring your favorite main course dish, salad, or hors d'oeuvres, and plates and utensils. We will provide dessert and coffee or tea.

Help support all of Sequoia Audubon's ongoing educational, scientific, and conservation activities. We will have some great items donated by our members and local businesses. Donation is \$1 per raffle ticket.

If you have items or services to donate please contact Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769.

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.