

SEQUOIA NEEDLES

*Bulletin of the Sequoia Audubon Society, San Mateo County
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September-October 2006*

SEASON ENDS AT AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

BY SUE COSSINS

The final nesting stats won't be in until later in September, but from all accounts it was another exciting year at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Bolinas Lagoon Preserve. Bob and I hosted on March 25, 2006, the first weekend the preserve was open to the public, and the Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons were busy with courtship and nest building. The season ended on July 15.

Many thanks to those who hosted for a day (and some for two days): Dave & Carol Amaral, Hans Arps, Bill & Peggy Bechtell, Kay Bullock, Justine & Lloyd Carson, Sue Carter, Jean Espey, Jeff Fairclough, Laurie Graham, Tippy Irwin, Twyla Jorgensen, Nancy Kraus, Peter Masters, Leslie McQuaide, Sonny & Isabel Mencher, Paula Miller, Theresa O'Brien, Liz Ruellen, Elvira & Werner Schuman, Norma Vite, Jim & Pat Watters, and Martha Wessitsh.

NEST BOX PREDATORS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

Although nest boxes provide high-quality nest sites for many native birds, they also present easy targets for predators. This last nesting season has seen an increase in nest box disturbance and a decrease in cavity-nesting bird populations in our boxes. Predation is part of nature and we must learn to accept it. There are, however, many things we can do to lessen predation to nest boxes.

Nest box "landlords" have been inventing ways to fortify their nest boxes against the common predators. We just have to be smarter than the predators. Here are some of the predators and some ways to thwart them.

The Common Culprits

Squirrels: In some regions, squirrels do great damage to nest boxes. By chewing at entrance holes to enlarge them, they make access easier for themselves and other predators.

Solution: If squirrels are a problem, cut a hole in a piece of sheet metal the same size and

SEQUOIA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFERS BIRDING CLASSES

SAS will be offering five free birding classes in the coming year. They will be held at the San Mateo Garden Center on our regularly scheduled meeting nights in the months of October, December, January, February and April from 7:00 - 9:00pm.

Content will include the anatomy/physiology of birds, shorebirds, gulls, and spring/fall migration.

The beginner/intermediate-level classes will be combined with a three-hour field study session on the Saturday morning following each class. There will be a \$5.00 charge for the field study to pay for the instructor's time. The instructors are Paul Donohue, Allan Ridley, and Alvaro Jaramillo.

See details about the first birding class under Programs on p. 2.

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

September

Thursday, 14th, 7:30 PM

Program: Hawks and Migration

October

Thursday, 12th, 7:00 PM

Program: Birding Class: The Anatomy of Flight

November

Thursday, 9th, 7:30 PM

Program: The Southern Ocean

(See program details on page 2)

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details beginning on page 3)

September

Sunday, 10th Burleigh H. Murray Ranch

Sunday, 10th San Francisco Aquatic Park*

Saturday, 16th Hawk Hill & Raptor Migration*

Saturday, 16th Coastal Cleanup Day*

Saturday, 16th Bair Island

Sunday, 17th Pescadero Marsh Work Day

Saturday, 23rd Pescadero Marsh

Sunday, 24th Edgewood Park

Friday, 29th Pelagic Trip

October

Saturday, 14th Mountain View Shoreline Park

Sunday, 15th Pescadero Marsh Work Day

Saturday, 21st Redwood Shores*

Sunday, 22nd San Francisco Aquatic Park*

Saturday, 28th Filoli Estate

Sunday, 29th Edgewood Park

November

Sunday, 12th Pescadero Marsh Work Day

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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 SUE COSSINS & PAULA MILLER

Hawks and Migration

By Allen Fish, Director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory
Thursday, September 14, 7:30 PM
Learn about the migrating birds of prey along the Pacific Flyway. The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory is at the Marin Headlands (just north of the Golden Gate Bridge) and is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Each fall thousands of raptors migrating along the Pacific coast pass over the Marin Headlands on their way south. Where do

Accompanying field trip: Saturday, October 14, 9:00-11:30 AM

The Saturday morning field trip to the ponds and sloughs of Mountain View Shoreline Park will allow us to observe flight in diverse species, an illustrated anatomy lesson "on the wing." There will be a \$5 charge for this field trip. To reach the field trip site, travel south on Hwy 101 to the San Antonio Road North exit. Turn right on Terminal Blvd., and park toward the south end of this dead-end street.

The Southern Ocean, Including South Georgia, the South Orkneys, and the Antarctic Peninsula

By Doug Cheeseman
November 9, 8:00-9:00 PM

This program will highlight the birds, animals, and wild places of the Southern Ocean.

Doug Cheeseman and family, of Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris, have led expeditions to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean for over 20 years. Through his images and discussion of Antarctic biology he will take you on a journey into one of the world's richest and most extreme environments. Doug retired from teaching zoology and ecology at De Anza College for 35 years to photograph and lead wildlife safaris around the world full time. His nature photographs have been widely published in magazines including *National Audubon* and *National Geographic*.



Laysan Albatross

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.

Note: Regular meetings start at 7:30 pm, with program beginning at 8:00 pm. Birding classes start at 7:00 pm.

these birds come from and where do they go? The GGRO monitors these bird migrations and studies their movements. Allen Fish is the Director of the GGRO and a hawk expert.

Birding Class: The Anatomy of Flight

By Allan Ridley
Thursday, October 12, 7:00-9:00 PM
How do birds do it? We marvel at muscle-powered flight -- long migrations, effortless soaring, underwater pursuit of fish, streaking dives that end with an explosion of feathers, or "simply" flying into a tree to land. Their basic anatomy is similar to ours, but we cannot do those things. Through computer-projected images and hands-on materials, Allan and his wife, Helen McKenna, will show us how the structure of birds is modified to allow for such a variety of aerial performances. Allan taught biology and ornithology at The Urban School in San Francisco for 35 years. He and his wife have led birding trips in many parts of the world and lead regular monthly trips for Golden Gate Audubon in the San Francisco Botanical Gardens at Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park. Together they will instruct and entertain at our October meeting. Don't miss it.



FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

Burleigh H. Murray Ranch – Half Moon Bay

Sunday, September 10, 9:00 AM – Noon
Visit this historic ranch on the San Mateo County coast. Join Ranger Nelle Lyons for this easy walk, looking for resident and migrant birds. We will learn about the natural history of this seldom-visited park. Learn about the early settlers to San Mateo County.

Dress in layers; bring fluids, hat, and walking shoes. Trail may be suitable for strollers. (Call in advance to verify conditions.) No parking fee is required at the small parking lot. Additional information may be found at the following websites: http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=535;

<http://www.ritzcarlton.com/resources/coastsidemap.pdf>; <http://www.bahiker.com/southbayhikes/burleigh.html>.

Directions: From the intersection of Highway 1 and Highway 92 in Half Moon Bay drive approximately 1 mile south on Highway 1 and turn left (east) onto Higgins-Purissima Road (at the Fire Station.) Drive east about 1.5 miles and watch for the park entrance on the left.

Leader: Ranger Nelle Lyons (650) 726-8804 voicemail box 7#

Beginner/Family Trip

San Francisco Aquatic Park

Sunday, September 10, 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, 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 1½ - 2 hours. There is no charge and the 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.

Leader: Carol Kiser (415) 561-7100

Beginner/Family Trip – Wheelchair Accessible

Hawk Hill and Raptor Migration on the Marin Headlands

Saturday, September 16, 9:30 AM

Join Allen Fish, Director of the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory, for a day at Hawk Hill during the peak of raptor migration. Expect to see accipiters (Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks), falcons, (Kestrels, Merlins, and perhaps Peregrines), Buteos (Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and maybe Broad-winged and Ferruginous Hawks), TVs and Northern Harriers. We will also look for migrants in the trees around the hill. Bring binoculars, lunch, and liquids. The weather can change within minutes so remember to dress in layers for warm to cool, windy, and foggy weather. Meet at the base of Hawk Hill at 9:30 AM. There will be a Hawk Talk at noon and a banding demonstration with a live hawk at 1:00 PM, given by the GGRO volunteers.

Directions: From San Mateo drive north across the Golden Gate Bridge. Take the first exit, Alexander Ave. Make an immediate left and drive under the freeway and then left again as though you were going to get back on the bridge. Take the road immediately on your right going up hill (Conzelman Road). Follow it along the coastline to where it becomes one way; there is a parking area. Park and meet at the fire road gate – you will see a brown "Hawk Hill" sign pointing the way. If you come later, walk up the road to the top of the hill and join us. Check out their great web site: <http://www.ggro.org/index.html>.

Leader: Allen Fish (415) 331-0730

Beginner/Family Trip

California Coastal Cleanup Day Bird Walk at Half Moon Bay State Beach

Saturday, September 16, 1:00 PM (after the Coastal Cleanup)

Join Rita Jennings for a bird walk at Half Moon Bay State Beach after the Coastal Cleanup Day activities. We will explore the coastal areas and the beach looking for early migrants and resident birds in the sand dunes and coastal scrub. Be on the lookout for seabirds and waders along the beach. Rita will teach you about the Snowy Plover program at Half Moon Bay

(Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

Sunday, 12th San Francisco Aquatic Park*

Saturday, 18th Pescadero Marsh

Sunday, 19th Edgewood Park

December

Saturday & Sunday, 2nd & 3rd

Sacramento Wildlife Refuges

Saturday, 16th and Saturday, 30th

Christmas Bird Counts — See p. 5

*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, sturdy walking shoes or boots, sun block, and 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.

Sequoia Audubon on the Web

Remember to check out our web site for updates on field trips, conservation news, and links to great birding sites.

www.sequoia-audubon.org

Sequoia eNews

Send us your email address to receive the *Sequoia Audubon eNews* each month. Get updates about field trips, conservation news, and information you need to know. Send your address to:

office@sequoia-audubon.org

(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

State Beach and why this bird is so important for our coast. For information call (650) 726-8804, voicemail box 7#.

Directions: Take Hwy 92 west to Hwy 1. Go south on Hwy 1 to the first stoplight; turn right onto Kelly Ave. Go west towards the ocean to the end of the street into Francis State Beach. The parking fee is \$6 per vehicle.

Leader: Rita Jennings (650) 728-2254

Beginner/Family Trip

Restoration Paddle at Bair Island with Save the Bay

Saturday, September 16, 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Help restore Bair Island in Redwood City, a wetland gem on the edge of the Bay managed by Don Edwards S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Save the Bay has a special use permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to do restoration work on Middle Bair Island, a site that is off limits to the general public. Participants will paddle canoes to Middle Bair Island, help remove non-native plants including ice plant, and get connected to the Bay. Cost: Save the Bay Members \$25; non-members \$35. Contact Jocelyn at 510-452-9261 x109 or sign up at www.savesfbay.org/bayevents.

Pescadero Marsh Work Day

Sunday, September 17, 10:00 AM – Noon

Norma needs help. Help keep the Sequoia Trail at Pescadero Marsh clear. We meet once a month and work for two hours and enjoy some birding. Bring gloves and whatever garden tools you like to work with. Have fun; meet new people, and help Pescadero Marsh.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot south of the bridge on Hwy 1. Or join us on the trail if you arrive after 10:00 AM. For more information call Norma Vite (650) 560-9740.

Environmental Restoration Activity

Pescadero Marsh with Al De Martini

Saturday, September 23, 9:00 AM

Join Al in exploring this great birding spot. Pescadero Marsh is one of the premier birding spots in the county. It is located on the Pacific Flyway and serves as an important stopover for migrant birds. We will be looking for shorebirds, early ducks, and a variety of marsh birds. Walk along the newly cleared Sequoia Audubon Trail and see the work our volunteers have done on trail restoration. The weather may be cool or warm depending upon fog and wind conditions, so prepare accordingly. Boots are recommended for wet conditions. Walking is relatively easy on level grades.

Directions: Take Hwy 1 South to Pescadero Marsh. Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot just south of the bridge.

Leader: Al DeMartini (650) 345-6988

Beginner/Family Trip

Edgewood Park Walk

Sunday, September 24, 8:00 – 11:00 AM

Birding should be great at Edgewood Park. Look for resident and fall migratory species. Ask leader Lee Franks about the Sequoia Audubon Bird Conservation Program at Edgewood Park and how you can get involved. Starting at 8 AM increases the chance of seeing all the interesting fall birds at Edgewood.

Directions: Meet the leader in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area. The Edgewood Park entrance is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City.

Leader: Lee Franks (650) 592-7733

Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip with Shearwater Journeys -- Fall Seabird Classic

Friday, September 29

Special Sequoia Member Discount Cost \$85; regular price \$125

This fun all-day pelagic trip is organized by Debra Love Shearwater, an expert in seabird identification. Fall is an excellent time of year to see Southern Hemisphere seabird rarities with possible sightings of Black-footed Albatross, Laysans, Short-tailed Albatross, and Bulwer's Petrel. This is also a good time for terns and Long-tailed Jaegers. We will be on the lookout for Blue Whales and other marine mammals. To make your reservation, send a check or money order to: Shearwater Journeys, PO Box 190, Hollister, CA 95024. Because of changing fuel costs there may be a fuel surcharge. Please mention that you are with Sequoia Audubon for the discounted rates; don't miss out on this great deal. This discounted rate is **non-refundable for any reason**. For questions call Debra at (831) 637-8527 or go to www.shearwaterjourneys.com.

Birding Class: Mountain View Shoreline Park

Saturday, October 14, 9:00-11:30 AM

Please see details under Programs. p. 2

Pescadero Marsh Work Day

Sunday, October 15, 10:00 AM – Noon

Pescadero Marsh is beautiful at this time of year. We work once each month to clear the Sequoia Audubon Trail at the marsh. We work for two hours and enjoy some birding. Bring gloves and whatever garden tools you like to work with. Have fun; meet new people, and help Pescadero Marsh.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot south of the bridge on Hwy 1. Or join us on the trail if you arrive after 10:00 AM. For more information call Norma Vite (650) 560-9740.

Environmental Restoration Activity

Redwood Shores

Saturday, October 21, 9:00 AM – Noon

Beginners, families and intermediate birders will enjoy exploring Redwood Shores. After checking the latest reports, we will search for rarities in the ponds and sloughs. As high tide develops we will get close looks at resting shorebirds at the Waterbird and Nob Hill Ponds.

Directions: Take the Holly St/Redwood Shores Pkwy exit off Highway 101 and go east. Turn right into the shopping center and park in front of the Nob Hill Market. We can carpool from there.

Leader: Sue Cossins (650) 347-9358

Beginner/Family Trip

San Francisco Aquatic Park

Sunday, October 22, 9:30 AM

For details, see trip description under September 10.

Filoli Estate Bird Walk

Saturday, October 28, 8:30 AM

The Filoli Estate is the property of the National Trust for

(Continued on page 5)

(Field Trips, continued from page 4)

Historic Preservation. We have been invited for a morning of birding at this beautiful site on the edge of the San Francisco watershed. The grounds have a fine planted garden surrounded by large oaks and trails leading to riparian, redwood, and farm habitats. Over 96 species of birds have been found here.

Reservations are required because this trip is limited to 20 people maximum (Sorry, no children under 14.) No food or picnicking is allowed, but all are welcome to buy light food and beverages at the Café and visit the gift shop after the walk.

Directions: Take Hwy 280 to the Edgewood Road exit; go west. Turn right (north) on Cañada Road and drive approx. ½ mile to the entrance of Filoli. We will meet in front of the Visitors Center. If you want to remain after the field trip to walk through the house and/or gardens, there is a \$12.00 entrance fee. Heavy Rain Cancels. Call Sue James at (650) 348-0315 to reserve your spot.

Leaders: Sue James and Donna Petersen

Edgewood Park Walk

Sunday, October 29, 8:00 – 11:00 AM

Fall Migration should be in full swing. Visiting migrants and resident birds can be seen at this unique habitat.

Directions: The Edgewood Park entrance is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City. Meet at 8:00AM sharp in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area. Heavy Rain cancels. **Note:** Daylight Saving Time starts today.

Leader: Lee Franks (650) 592-7733

Pescadero Marsh Work Day

Sunday, November 12, 10:00 AM – Noon

Help keep the Sequoia Trail at Pescadero Marsh clear. We meet once a month and work for two hours and enjoy some birding. Bring gloves and whatever garden tools you work with. Have fun, meet new people, and help Pescadero Marsh.

Directions: Meet at the parking lot south of the bridge on Hwy 1. Or join us on the trail if you arrive after 10:00 AM. For more information call Norma Vite at (650) 560-9740.

Environmental Restoration Activity

San Francisco Aquatic Park

Sunday, November 12, 9:30 AM

For details, see trip description under September 10.

Pescadero Marsh with Gary Deghi

Saturday, November 18, 9:00 AM

Pescadero Marsh is one of the premier birding spots in the county. It is located on the Pacific Flyway and serves as an important stopover point for migrant shorebirds, a wintering ground for waterfowl, and breeding ground for a variety of marsh birds. Walk along the newly cleared Sequoia Audubon Trail and see the work our volunteers have done on trail restoration. The weather may be cool or warm depending upon fog and wind conditions, so prepare accordingly. Boots are recommended for wet conditions. Walking is relatively easy on level grades.

Directions: Take Hwy 1 South to Pescadero Marsh. Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot just south of the bridge.

Leader: Gary Deghi (650) 726-1340

Beginner/Family Trip

Edgewood Park Walk

Sunday, November 19, 8:00 – 11:00 AM

Birding should be great at Edgewood Park. Look for resident and fall migratory species. Ask leader Lee Franks about the Sequoia Audubon Bird Conservation Program at Edgewood Park and how you can get involved. Starting at 8 AM increases the chance of seeing all the interesting fall birds at Edgewood.

Directions: Meet the leader in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area. The Edgewood Park entrance is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City.

Leader: Lee Franks (650) 592-7733

Sacramento Wildlife Refuges Weekend Trip

Saturday & Sunday, December 2 & 3

The Central Valley is considered to be the single most important wintering site for waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway. Come join us for a weekend of great birding at the Sacramento Refuge Complex. This area has freshwater marshes, riparian woodlands, and valley grasslands. We may see White-faced Ibis, lots of ducks, White-fronted, Snow, and Ross's Geese, hawks, sparrows, woodpeckers, and more. We will travel in a car caravan since walkers tend to disturb the wildlife in some areas. Motel reservations are advised. Willows and Williams have a good selection of motels in all price ranges. Camping is available at the Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation Area in Colusa. Our precise itinerary will depend on where the birds are. **Trip reservations are requested** so we will know how many to expect.

Directions: Take Hwy 80 Northeast towards Sacramento. Go North on Hwy 505 to meet Hwy 5 North towards Williams and Willows. Take the Princeton/Road 68 exit. Turn right and go a short distance. Turn left before you reach the railroad tracks; look for the refuge entrance on the right. We will meet at the parking lot inside the entrance to the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge at 9:00 AM sharp.

Leader: Joe Macho (650) 692-8138

SAVE THE DATES: SEQUOIA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Crystal Springs Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 16

The Crystal Springs count is regularly one of the top 10 for numbers of species identified. We need your help to exceed our count from last year. Better yet, sign up for both the Crystal Springs and the Año Nuevo counts. Some of the best birding you do this year will be at the Christmas counts.

Año Nuevo Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 30

Come and help us make this the biggest bird count ever. This count has the potential to match or exceed the Crystal Springs Count in species diversity and numbers of birds, but is traditionally under-reported due to the small number of participants. **SIGN UP NOW!**

Christmas Count Compiler — Al DeMartini

Send email to office@sequoia-audubon.org or call Leslie Flint (650) 573-6279, Gary Deghi (650) 726-1340, or Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769.

shape as the entrance hole and attach to the front of the box.

Cats: Cats can catch birds on the ground, in the air, or they can hook them out of a shallow nest box. Cats climb posts, reach into nest boxes, and harm the young. They can also sit on top of the box and harass or kill the adults. If the box is too low to the ground they can sit on the ground in front of the box and jump up to catch the adults.

Solution: Place your box eight feet above the ground or use a hanging box. Keep cats indoors and away from temptation.

Snakes: Snakes, especially those of the genus *Elaphe*, such as rat snakes, and those of the genus *Pituophis*, such as bull snakes and pine-gopher snakes, are predators to Bluebirds in many parts of the country. One study showed that more snake predation occurred within 300 feet of woods. Snakes climb up poles, even poles that are greased or spread with tangle foot, and eat young and eggs. Often there is little sign of disturbance to the nest because a snake will leave no sign of its visit.

Solution: Snakes may be deterred by a 4" PVC pipe or with specific snake traps. Boxes located in mowed areas are less likely to be visited by a snake because snakes need some groundcover to conceal themselves from hawks or other natural enemies.

(Continued on page 7)



Fall 2006 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER FORM

All Orders Must Be Received with Payment by Friday, October 20

Orders received after October 20 cannot be filled

Pickup dates will be November 1-5, 2006

Confirmation and details will be sent via e-mail or U.S. Mail.



Check Preferred pickup location below:

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

		Number of Bags	Cost in \$
Audubon Wild Bird Mix	20 lb @ \$14.00/bag		
Black Oil Sunflower	25 lb @ \$12.50/bag		
White Proso Millet	25 lb @ \$12.00/bag		
Thistle— 5 lb.	5 lb @ \$10.00/bag		
Thistle 20 lb.	20 lb @ \$32.00/bag		
Sunflower Chips	25 lb @ \$28.00/bag		
Total birdseed purchases (sales tax is included in all prices above)			
Tax-deductible contribution to Sequoia Audubon Society (Thank You!)			
Grand total (check payable to Sequoia Audubon Society)			

Proceeds support local Audubon conservation programs

Please enclose an e-mail address or a stamped self-addressed envelope to receive your order confirmation and directions to pick-up location. Mail check and order to:

Sequoia Audubon Society, c/o Jeanne Scharetz

315 Shad Court, Foster City, CA 94404

E-mail: office@sequoia-audubon.org Information: (650) 235-6040 (Ann-Marie Holmes)

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Birdseed supplied by the Wild Bird Center of San Carlos.

Watch for the next seed sale. Thanks for supporting Sequoia Audubon.



Photograph by Bob Cossins

Western Bluebird chicks

Nest Box Predators, continued from page 6)

Hawks: Hawks can kill adult and fledgling birds as they fly about the nest box. Kestrels have been reported to cling to an entrance hole of 1 1/4 inches, reach in, and remove a six-day-old nestling. Sharp-shinned Hawks have been reported to catch adult bluebirds as they left the nest box.

Solution: For protection from hawks, place boxes away from known nesting hawks and away from power lines or other perches above the box where hawks can dive down and surprise adults.

Wrens: These cute little birds can prey on bluebirds by puncturing and/or removing eggs. You may see that the eggs have tiny puncture holes and are sometimes thrown to the ground. In some cases House Wrens have killed adults or nestlings and thrown them to the ground.

Solution: The best protection from wrens is to keep the bluebird houses away from wren habitat.

House Sparrows: House Sparrows are not friends of Bluebirds. They are an invasive species introduced to the U.S. in the 1800s. They can be vicious predators and may be a key factor in the decline of many migratory and cavity-nesting birds. They can enter a nest box and kill adult songbirds or young by pecking at their eyes or heads. House Sparrows can destroy eggs by pecking at them or removing them from the nest. They frequently build their nests over the bodies of their victims.

Solution: The best way to control House Sparrows is to check the boxes frequently during nesting season and remove their nests and eggs. Avoid placing bluebird nest boxes near active farm buildings, dog kennels, or other animal care operations where sparrows can find spilled food and hay as well as shelter.

Raccoons: Probably the major culprit and biggest predator for nesting birds is the raccoon. Raccoons are very agile and tree climbing is second nature to them. They make quick work of wooden fence posts and can climb metal fence posts with ease. They climb to the boxes at night and can kill the adults and young and eat the eggs in the nestbox. A nest that has been disturbed by a raccoon will be missing birds or eggs and the nesting material may be pulled partway through the entrance hole. Or you may see claw marks on the box and feathers or bits of egg scattered on the ground below the box. Raccoons may sit on the roof of the box and lean over to reach into the

entrance hole. They are also strong enough to pull apart weak nest boxes. We have had raccoons lift a hanging box off a tree limb and drop it to the ground.

Raccoons are especially difficult to deter because they are intelligent and persistent. Once they learn that nest boxes are a good "fast food" source they may raid an entire Bluebird trail in a single night.

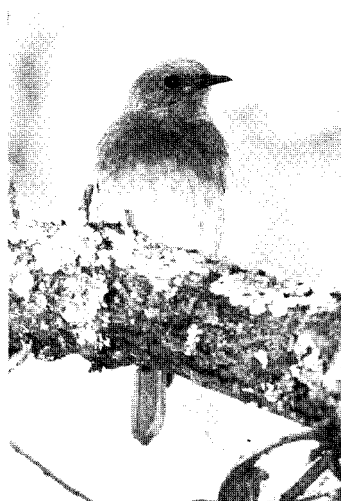
Solution: Some ways to deter raccoon predators is to use hanging boxes placed on thinner tree limbs. Incorporate a long overhang on the roof of the box. Use a deep or tall box so the raccoons cannot reach down into the nest area. Keep the nest box entrance hole less than 1 9/16th inch diameter. Another method is to add a hole guard or restrictor to the front of the box. Tube type guards extending out from the box make it difficult for the predator to reach into the box. The hole guard may be made from small plastic PVC pipe, wood, or paper tube rolls. But these types of tubes make it difficult for nesting birds to make hundreds of trips in and out of the box to feed their young. A larger pipe diameter and a length of at least six inches may work for bluebirds and still keep raccoons out. A plastic or metal mesh guard will allow the birds to see predators when entering and leaving the box. But these guards should be placed onto the box before the first egg is laid. Placing a guard after eggs are laid may disturb the birds and cause them to abandon the nest. A new and more effective deterrent is in the works. It consists of a simple wood block guard made up of three pieces of wood. These pieces of wood will block a raccoon from sitting on the roof of a house and reaching in. This will be tested next season to determine if it will provide us with a simple, cost effective solution to raccoon predation.

References:

The Bluebird Monitor's Guide to Bluebirds and Other Small Cavity-Nesters by C. Berger, K. Kridler, & J. Griggs, printed by HarperCollins.

Monitoring Guide: Monitoring Your Bluebird Trail in California by Hatch Graham, birdsily@innerecrite.com, printed by California Bluebird Recovery Program.

Western Bluebird



Photograph by Bob Cossins

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Thank You!

Volunteer Help Needed

Help with bird surveys at the Williams Sisters Ranch. The ranch is a 1200-acre Audubon Sanctuary on Skyline Blvd. in southern San Mateo County. If you would like to visit this closed area and help with the survey call Lee Franks (650) 592-7733 funseekers2@juno.com

Want to help with a bird study at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont? We need birders to help with field surveys at the university. Contact Kathy Peila, GIS Program Manager, School of Sciences (650) 508-3491 or kpeilia@ndnu.edu

Did you participate in the Christmas Bird Count last year? We need people to help Norma with the count dinners. Volunteers will help set tables, collect money, buy the food, serve the food, and clean up after dinner. Contact Norma Vite (650) 560-9740 nolema@coastside.net

If you like office work we need help organizing the paper work for the count. A month before the count, we need to make copies of maps, bird lists, and directions for the counters. Contact Carol Masterson (650) 347-1769 or carolmasterson@sbcglobal.net

Sequoia Audubon is starting up our education programs again. Would you like to visit with a school group in the

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classroom or on a field trip to teach kids about birds and birding? Commitment would be one weekday a month at different schools in San Mateo County. Work with our new Education Chairman, Kathy Peila, to introduce kids to nature and birding. You don't need to be an expert; just enjoy kids and birding. Contact Kathy at (650) 508-3491 or kpeilia@ndnu.edu



Spotted Owl

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If you become a local member of Sequoia Audubon all your dues will go directly to programs in San Mateo County. Local membership ensures that Sequoia Audubon will remain a strong advocate for birds and natural resources in San Mateo County.

Thank You.

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.