

SEQUOIA NEEDLES

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

Volume 58, No. 1
September-October 2007

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

SEQUOIA AUDUBON UPDATE, 2007

BY CAROL MASTERSON

We had our Summer Planning meeting July 15, 2007, at which we reviewed our activities for the last year (July 2006 to June 2007) and planned for the coming year. Boy, have the volunteers of Sequoia Audubon been busy!

Sequoia presented ten Thursday night member programs of which five were birding classes with follow-up field trips on Saturday. These class-plus-field trip sessions were very popular with over 40 people coming to some sessions! We had 50 field trips in and around San Mateo County and seven out-of-area birding trips. We held two successful Christmas Bird Counts again this year finding more than 200 species. We published five *Needles* newsletters and 12 eNews monthly updates last year.

Our **education volunteers** gave bird talks at two senior centers and one Rotary Club, held two Cub Scout bird walks for about 50 youngsters, and helped teach school kids about building Bluebird Boxes. We manned information booths at the Half Moon Bay Ecofest, the International Migratory Bird Days, Woodside EcoDay, and the Coyote Point EcoDay. We held a Chinese New Years volunteer thank-you lunch. We gave Environmental Educator awards to Nelle Lyons and Dave Augustine, California State Park Rangers who have helped educated hundreds of San Mateo County school kids about nature. We had a fun event in March when we collaborated with Friends of Wunderlich Park to help preserve the historic Folger Stable. We led bird walks around the park and served hot chocolate and muffins.

Our **conservation volunteers** really kept an "eagle eye" on the county. They



helped defeat development at Bayfront Park in Menlo Park and continued to monitor Wave Crest in Half Moon Bay and development near the Brisbane Lagoon and Redwood Shores. We worked with California Audubon and other Bay Area Audubon groups to respond to the EIR/EIS for the giant South Bay Salt Pond Restoration project, ensuring a voice for protection of birds in the project. We had nine volunteer work days at Pescadero Marsh to help keep the Sequoia Audubon Trail clear. Our Sequoia Audubon volunteers hosted at Audubon Canyon Ranch ten days this season with about 40 people helping to meet and greet visitors.

Our volunteers helped to maintain our member database and send renewal letters out to our members and thank-you letters to our donors.

SAS continues our collaboration with The California State Parks in San Mateo County. We donated about 300 hours of volunteer time, helped with the Snowy Plover Watch program, worked with the state to write a grant proposal to improve the trails at Pescadero Marsh, purchased a birding scope for the docent program, and purchased trail-clearing equipment for the marsh. SAS continues to support the Edgewood Park Bird Monitoring program. We have a new enthusiastic co-director for the Bluebird Recovery program, Susan Kritzik, who collaborates with California Bluebird Recovery and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Our volunteers did all of the above and more. I am so proud to be associated with Sequoia Audubon. We are a strong organization because of our volunteers.

Thank you.

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center

September

Thursday, 13th, 7:00 PM

Program: Birds and Mammals of Africa

October

Thursday, 11th, 7:00 PM

Program: Burrowing Owls in California

November

Thursday, 8th, 7:00 PM

Program: Birding Class: Raptor ID and Migration

(See program details on page 2)

Upcoming Field Trips

(See trip details beginning on page 3)

September

Sunday, 9th Burleigh H. Murray Ranch*

Saturday, 15th Coyote Point Bird Walk*

Monday, 24th Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip

Saturday, 29th Año Nuevo State Reserve

Sunday, 30th Edgewood Park*

October

Sunday, 14th The BIG SIT*

Wednesday, 17th Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve

Saturday, 27th Filoli Estate

Sunday, 28th Edgewood Park*

November

Sunday, 4th Pescadero State Park*

Saturday, 10th Hawk Hill and Raptor Migration*

Saturday, 10th Bair Island

* Beginner/Family Trip

(Continued on page 3)

Sequoia Audubon Society

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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 AND PAULA MILLER

Birds and Mammals of Africa – from Cape Town to Cairo

Thursday, September 13, 7:00 PM

By Bill and Peggy Bechtell

Bill and Peggy will share photos that they took on a 30-day tour of Africa in October 2006. The tour began in Cape Town, South Africa; then proceeded to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe; Chobe National Park, Botswana; Masai Mara and Amboseli National Parks, Kenya; and Cairo and the Nile River in Egypt.

Monthly Meetings

San Mateo Garden Center
605 Parkside Way, San Mateo
*Parkside Way is west of Alameda
de las Pulgas, between 26th and
8th Avenues.*

Highlights of the trip included visiting a colony of African "jackass" penguins near Cape Town and exploring the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens on the slopes of Cape Town's Table Mountain. In the national parks of east Africa they stayed at safari lodges and went on many excursions into the bush to observe wildlife. Over 100 bird species were sighted, as well as 42 species of mammals, including all of the "big five" (lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and Cape Buffalo). At Masai Mara National Park they witnessed the massive wildebeest migration crossing the Mara River and visited a native Masai village. In Cairo they saw the Giza pyramids and other historic sites, then took a 4-day cruise on the Nile River from Luxor to Aswan, stopping at the Valley of the Kings and numerous temples along the way. In Aswan they sailed in a felucca, the traditional sailboat of the Nile.

Bill and Peggy are long-time members of SAS and past Board members. They have lived on the coast in Montara for the last 30 years, and have been active in environmental issues in that area. Since retiring 10 years ago (Bill was a civil engineer and Peggy a psychotherapist), they have traveled extensively throughout the U.S. in their RV and overseas.

Burrowing Owls in California – An Abundant Endangered Species?

Thursday, October 11, 7:00 PM

By Jack Barclay

Mr. Barclay will present a slideshow about Burrowing owls in California. In the first part of his presentation he summarizes Burrowing owl natural history and the owl's range, abundance, distribution, and habitat associations in California. He discusses its conservation status and addresses the question "Why all the concern about burrowing owls in California?" In the second part of his slideshow he summarizes the Burrowing owl management program at San Jose International Airport, where this important San Francisco Bay Area owl colony has significantly increased during the last 10 years. In the last part of his slideshow he looks at the population dynamics of this colony to see why it has increased – in contrast to the species' general trend in many parts of California, where breeding Burrowing owls have disappeared.

Mr. Barclay has been a professional raptor biologist for 31 years. He graduated from Cornell University in 1972 and worked for 11 years at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology on the program to restore peregrine falcons in the eastern U.S. Since coming to California in 1989 he has focused on Burrowing owl research, management, and conservation. He organized the California Burrowing Owl Symposium, a two-day conference in Sacramento in November 2003. He is editor of the Proceedings of this conference, which will be published in 2007. He has been a member of the California Burrowing Owl Consortium since 1990 and has actively worked to advance Burrowing owl conservation in California.

Birding Class: Raptor ID and Migration

Thursday, November 8, 7:00 PM

By Allen Fish

Learn about the migrating birds of prey along the Pacific Flyway. The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO) is at the Marin Headlands, just north of the

(Continued on page 8)



FIELD TRIPS

BY CAROL MASTERSON

Burleigh H. Murray Ranch – Half Moon Bay

Sunday, September 9, 9:00 AM – Noon

Visit this historic ranch on the San Mateo County coastside. We will learn about the natural history of this seldom-visited park and about the early settlers in San Mateo County. Join Ranger Nelle Lyons for this easy walk, while looking for resident and migrant birds. Dress in layers and bring fluids, a hat, and walking shoes. Trail may be suitable for strollers – call in advance to verify conditions.

Directions: From the intersection of Hwy 1 and Hwy 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. No parking fee is required at this small parking lot.

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

Beginner/Family Trip

Coyote Point Bird Walk

Saturday, September 15, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Discover the birds at Coyote Point. This area has become a hotspot for birders on the peninsula. The wetland fronting San Francisco Bay attracts numerous shore birds. The trees and grassy areas also provide good birding. This walk is co-sponsored by the Coyote Point Museum and Sequoia Audubon Society. Be sure to visit the museum after the walk.

Directions: Take Hwy 101 to the Peninsula Ave. exit in Burlingame. Go east following the signs to Coyote Point. Meet in front of the Coyote Point Museum at 8:00 AM sharp. Bring binoculars and scopes, and dress in layers. This trip will be wheelchair accessible on paved pathways.

Reservations required for the walk, so please reserve your spot early.

Leader: Sue Cossins 650-347-9358

Beginner/Family Trip

Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip with Shearwater Journeys – Fall Seabird Classic

Monday, September 24 – Special Sequoia Discount Cost \$100; regular price \$125

This fun all-day pelagic trip is organized by Debra Love Shearwater, an expert in seabird identification. September is an excellent time of year to see Southern Hemisphere seabird rarities with possible sightings of Black-footed, Laysan, and Short-tailed Albatross and Bulwer's Petrel. This is also a good time for terns and Long-tailed Jaegers. We will also 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. (831)637-8527. This discounted rate is **non-refundable, for any reason**. 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. For more information check out <http://www.shearwaterjourneys.com/reserve.shtml>

Año Nuevo State Reserve

Saturday, September 29, 8:00 AM

Año Nuevo is one of the most picturesque and ecologically rich areas along the central California coast. The reserve has about 4,000 acres of coast beaches, marshes, rolling dunes with coastal scrub, grasslands, and coastal mountain range. The reserve is famous for its Elephant seals and sea lions that visit the beaches here. It is a great spot for wintertime birding. Along the shore we will look for seabirds and wading birds. We will also look for wintertime visiting hawks and other raptors. And we will explore the Reserve for resident, migrant, and possible visiting bird rarities.

Directions: Take Hwy 92 west to Hwy 1 in Half Moon Bay. Go across Hwy 1 at the light, and drive into the Safeway parking lot. We will meet to carpool at 8:00 AM sharp, at the southwest corner of the lot. Dress in layers for cold, windy weather. Wear walking shoes and bring fluids and snacks. Heavy rain cancels.

Leader: Paula Miller, Docent at Año Nuevo, lovedashore@comcast.net

(Continued on page 4)

Upcoming Field Trips

(Continued from page 1)

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 make every 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

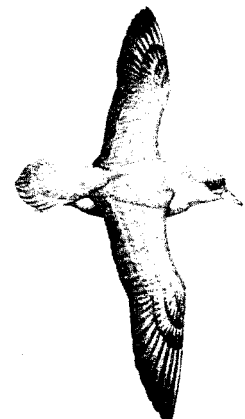
Remember to check out our web site for updates on field trips, conservation news, and links to great birding sites.

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



Northern Fulmar

(Field Trips, continued from page 3)

Edgewood Park Walk

Sunday, September 30, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Birding should be great at Edgewood Park. We'll be looking for resident and fall migratory species. Ask the leader 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: The entrance to Edgewood Park is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City. Meet the leader in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area.

Leader: Marilyn Travis 650-592-7733

Beginner/Advanced Birding

The BIG SIT at Bayfront Park, Menlo Park

Sunday, October 14, 8:00 AM – Sunset

Be part of an annual international event – The Big Sit. This fun event consists of seeing the highest number of species possible from a 17-foot diameter circle. You and your group count all the species seen and/or heard from within the circle. Teams across the country and the world participate in this off-beat event. Our Sequoia Audubon team will meet at the parking lot with the restroom at 8:00 AM sharp. To further whet your appetite for this offbeat event, visit the web page for the Big Sit: <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx>.

Directions: Take Hwy 101 to the Marsh Road exit in Menlo Park. Head east towards the Bay. At the end of the road, past the Bayfront Expressway, is the entrance to Bayfront Park. Dress in layers and bring snacks, sunscreen, hats, and good humor. Also bring a chair or pad to sit on.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga (650) 440-0063,
gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net

Beginner/Family trip — Wheelchair accessible.

Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve – Stanford University

Wednesday, October 17, 7:45 AM

Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve is a private reserve managed as a perpetual resource by Stanford University for research and advanced teaching. The preserve is a remarkable 1,189 acres forming a natural laboratory for researchers studying plant and animal ecosystems. We should see some great birds and enjoy a beautiful, almost-untouched refuge. This tour has been arranged by the docents of Jasper Ridge. To decrease the impact on the environment we will need to carpool and stay together as a group once inside the preserve gate. A \$5.00 preserve fee is charged. **We will meet at 7:45 AM sharp. Advance reservations are required for this mid-week walk.** (Sorry, no one under 14 years old.)

Please call Carol Masterson at (650) 347-1769 for more information, to make reservations and obtain directions.

Leader: Ted Chandick

Filoli Estate

Saturday, October 27, 8:30 AM – Noon

Filoli Estate is the property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. We have been invited for a morning of birding at this beautiful site on the edge of the San Francisco watershed land. In addition to birds, the wildflowers should be very plentiful at this time of year, especially in the shadier areas on the back roads. The grounds of Filoli 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; this trip is limited to 20 people maximum. (Sorry, no one under 14 years old.) No food or picnicking is allowed but all will be welcome after the walk to buy light food and beverages at the Café and visit the gift shop.

Directions: Take Hwy 280 to the Edgewood Road exit; go west. Turn right/north on Cañada Road and drive approximately one 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 formal gardens, there is a \$12.00 entrance fee. Heavy rain cancels. Call Sue James 650-348-0315 to reserve your spot.

Leaders: Sue James and Donna Petersen

Edgewood Park Walk

Sunday, October 28, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Fall migration should be in full swing. Visiting migrants and resident birds can be seen at this unique habitat. With grassland, oak woodland, and chaparral, we should see lots of birds. Ask the leader 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: The Edgewood Park entrance is east of Hwy 280 on Edgewood Road in Redwood City. Meet the leader in the parking lot adjacent to the Day Camp area.

Leader: Marilyn Travis 650-592-7733

Beginner/Advanced Birding

Less-Traveled Trails of Pescadero State Park

Sunday November 4, 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

We'll meet at the Water Lane entrance for Pescadero Marsh at 8:00 AM sharp. If rarities have been reported from the park, we'll include them in our itinerary. Possible birds include roosting Barn Owl, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Townsend's Warbler, Virginia Rail, Peregrine Falcon, and Blue-grey Gnatcatcher.

Directions: To get to the Water Lane entrance, from Hwy 1 turn east onto Pescadero Road, then left onto Water Lane. Drive to the end of Water Lane and park by the buildings. (Please leave room for the State Park Ranger vehicles.) Bring binoculars, liquids, snacks, hats, and sunscreen. Dress in layers.

Leader: Jennifer Rycenga 650-440-0063;
gyrrlfalcon@earthlink.net

Beginner/Advanced Birding

Hawk Hill and Raptor Migration, on the Marin Headlands

Saturday, November 10, 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), Turkey Vultures and Northern Harriers. We will also look for migrants in the trees around the hill. Bring binoculars, lunch, and liquids.

(Continued on page 5)

(Field Trips, continued from page 4)

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. This walk is part of a lecture and field trip class. There is a \$5 fee for this bird class, for the instructor's time.

Directions: Drive north from San Mateo 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.

Leader: Allen Fish at the GGRO 415-331-0730 and check out the great web site: <http://www.ggro.org/index.html>.

Beginner/Family trip

Wetland Restoration and Canoe Trip to Middle Bair Island, Redwood City, with Save the Bay

Saturday November 10, 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Join Save the Bay for a hearty canoe paddle out to this island site, where we will prepare for our winter planting projects by removing non-native plants. Sequoia Audubon was instrumental in helping to save Bair Island; we can now help to restore the island. Learn about the future plans for full restoration. Join us for a day of fun and service. This is a full day of activity with a moderate canoe trip. Boating equipment and instruction are provided; no experience is necessary. No one under 10 years old. Bring lunch, fluids, sunscreen, and a sunhat. Dress in layers. This is a Save the Bay program. \$25 members of Save the Bay; \$35 for non-members.

Contact: Jeanne Pardi at 510-452-9261, x119 or email bayevents@saveSFbay.org.

Restoration Activity

OAK TITMOUSE (*BAEOLOPHUS INORNATUS*)

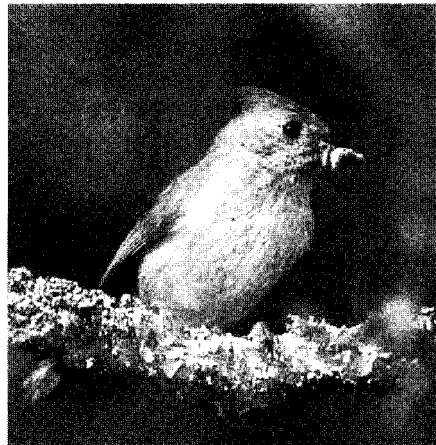
BY LEE FRANKS

The **weety, weety, weety** song and the husky **tsick-a-dee-dee** call (much like the chickadee sound) of the Oak Titmouse is a sound of our local oak woodlands. These little birds (5.5") are ordinary looking, but an oak woodland would seem empty without their subtle presence.

The name “titmouse” comes from European sources: “tit” is Scandinavian for little, and “mouse” is a corruption of “mase”, the Old English word for bird.

Appearance

The Oak Titmouse is a drably colored bird with a small pointed crest. Their upper parts are gray, and their under parts are grayish white. The coloration of the crest and face is similar to the remaining upper parts. They have black eyes in an almost blank face. Legs and feet are also black. Sexes are alike in color, but males are slightly larger than females.



Oak Titmouse, Photo by Tom Grey PBase galleries

are the main food taken. Their primary method of capturing insects is gleaning on bark and, to a lesser extent, foliage. Their bills are used in a variety of ways to expose arthropods; pecking and probing into crevices; chipping away bark, and pulling apart leaf galls, flowers, curled dead leaves, and lichens. They sometimes eat grubs out of acorns.

Whereas chickadees gather in winter flocks, the Oak Titmouse, which is in the same bird family (Paridae), is usually found alone, in pairs, or mixed in with a flock of chickadees.

The titmouse eats with its feet. They are one of the few perching birds that can use their feet to hold seeds while they break them open.

Sounds

The Oak Titmouse is highly vocal, and individuals are most commonly recognized by their chatter-like calls that males and females utter throughout the year. Males may sing infrequently during the non-breeding season, with singing intensity increasing toward spring. The song is a series of repeated, whistled notes of 3-7 syllables, each comprised of one low and one high note. Females apparently have the capacity to sing, but do so only rarely.

The Oak Titmouse has a remarkable alarm call that is a loud scold that fades off as if the bird is moving into the distance. This may fool predators into chasing the phantom bird while the titmouse stays safely hidden.

Breeding

The Oak Titmouse nests in mostly natural cavities and old woodpecker holes. It also uses nest boxes. Females build their nests with grass, moss, feathers, and shredded bark, mostly from March through April.

Titmice frequently pair up with the same mate throughout their short life, which seldom exceeds five years. (Life expectancy in birds is closely correlated with size; the larger the species, the longer it is likely to live. Few birds die of old age; they just run the same gamut of risks year in and year out

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SAS PROGRAM UPDATES



BLUEBIRD PROGRAM UPDATE

Susan Kritzik, San Mateo County Coordinator

With the departure of Howard and Jean Rathlesberger from the area, the County Bluebird Coordinator job stood open. I think we all felt that Howard did such an amazing job as advisor, nest box builder, bird bander, and educator, that he was a hard act to follow. So in stepping in, I don't pretend to fill Howard's shoes.

Hopefully, with the support and talent of the many dedicated birders in our county, we can continue the outstanding program that Howard nurtured for all these years.

Email addresses

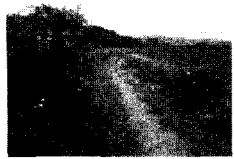
One area on which I am working is updating the email contacts for all monitors. If you are a monitor and are unsure if you are on the monitor email list, PLEASE send me your email address at sgkritzik@sbcglobal.net. Since almost all of our communication is through email now, we really need your addresses!! If you don't have email and want to be on the list or have questions, call me at 650-851-4529.

End of season reporting—new and easier!

This season, Dick Blaine of Santa Clara County has taken over the California Bluebird Recovery Program, and has a new reporting system. This is NOT the Cornell website; it is much easier. (Dick will forward the data to Cornell.) For those who are computer savvy, reporting can be done online at the end of the season. To enter your data, go to the CBRP website, www.cbrp.org. Scroll down to "End of Season Reporting" and click on "web page". Follow the instructions and links. Your user ID and passwords should be your first initial followed by your last name. If you can't get in or your trail isn't listed when you sign in, contact Dick Blaine at dick@theblaines.net. There are three other reporting options as well. These are detailed at the CBRP website.

For those who hate to use the computer, the good old nest box work sheets may be (snail) mailed to Dick Blaine at 22284 N. De Anza Circle, Cupertino, CA 95014. If you need work sheets, they are printable from the website, too.

I know all of you monitors spend a lot of hours in the field, so make sure your data gets counted. Thanks for your hard work!!



PESCADERO MARSH – Sequoia Audubon Trail Event Days, Sundays, 9:00 AM – Noon

September 16 October 21 November 18 December 16

Come and discover Pescadero Marsh. The California State Park Docents will lead a field trip to learn about the Marsh. This beautiful park has a mile-long shoreline, rocky cliffs, and of course the world-famous marsh. The docents will point out the plants and animals that inhabit this San Mateo County treasure. Meet at 9:00 AM; the nature walk will start at 10:00 AM. Come early and help work on the Sequoia Audubon Trail -- carry a bamboo rake, a pair of loppers, or a weed whacker. We will work for about one hour. If you would rather bird, read a book, or cheer us on that is also fine. Have fun and help the birds and wildlife at Pescadero Marsh. Contact Norma Vite (650) 560-9740 or email nolema@coastside.net.

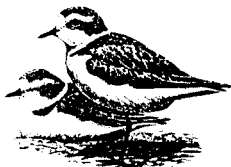
Directions: Go south from Half Moon Bay on Hwy 1, about 12 miles. Just past the bridge over Pescadero Creek, look for the south parking lot. If you get to the intersection of Pescadero Road and Hwy 1 you have gone too far. If it is not raining, meet in the parking lot just over the bridge at Pescadero State Beach. Look for the blue mini van with the sign in the window -- "SAS Sequoia Audubon We are on the Trail" http://www.greenfoothills.org/news/2001/08-2001_PescaderoButano.html

Beginner/Family/Restoration/Education Walk

News from Pescadero Marsh

Rita Jennings

The docent program is up and running. Ranger David Augustine and docents agree that the 3rd Sunday of every month, from 10 am to noon, is the best time to offer docent-led bird walks. We had an encouraging turn-out of docents on July 15, along with two members of the public. One, a local resident, had not toured the marsh for 20+ years. The other guest was from the East Coast. Highlights of that day included great blue herons in the rookery and an easily seen preening marsh wren. So mark your calendars for the future. We meet in the parking lot just south of the bridge on Highway 1.



News from Francis Beach

Rita Jennings

Western Snowy Plover nest #2 began hatching on July 24. If all goes well, chicks will fledge about 28 days from hatch date. Other snowy plovers are moving from beach to beach and late July population numbers are in the mid 20s. As the breeding season draws to a close the numbers of plovers on our beach increases making it more likely for a sighting of this threatened species.

SAVE THE DATES: 2007 SEQUOIA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Sign up now! Email Leslie Flint at llflint@earthlink.net or office@sequoia-audubon.org. Come join the large group of counters for fun and great birding. The Christmas Count is done every year to record as many individuals and different species in one day as possible. This year the Christmas Count schedule is as follows:

Crystal Springs Count – Saturday December 15, 2007
Count Dinner at the San Mateo Garden Center

Año Nuevo Count – Saturday December 29, 2007
Count Dinner at the Pescadero Community Church

We will break into teams, counting birds on the coastside, hill, or bayside. After the count, everyone will gather to tally the results and enjoy a compilation dinner. We also need feeder-watchers to count birds at their home feeders for a period of time in December. Counters with all levels of experience are welcome. For beginning birders, this is a great opportunity to gain experience working with the old pros.

When you sign up for the Christmas Count, please let us know your phone number, email address, experience, and whether you would prefer counting on the bayside or coastside. Be prepared to spend the day having fun and looking for birds, rain or shine. Each count costs \$5 to cover the cost of publishing the CBC results. Be sure to sign up for the count dinner. For a mere \$5 enjoy tasty, warm food and lively stories about the count. Last year our count dinner was voted “the best Christmas Count Dinner ever.” Reservations are requested so we can plan accordingly.

In addition to contributing to the gathering of important information about the birds of San Mateo County, the Christmas Count will be some of the best birding you will do for the year.

Please sign up early! Don't wait till the last minute. Now is a great time to put yourself on the Christmas Count list. We need to know well in advance of December who is available to count.

POINT PELEE, ONTARIO AND CRANE CREEK, OHIO, PART 2

BY ROBBIE FISCHER

Neither Joe nor I had ever birded these migrant traps on Lake Erie, but Crane Creek was fast becoming a rival to Point Pelee in birding destinations. We got an early start and were greeted at the boardwalk by a baffling array of bird songs. Our experience the prior three days was helpful in separating out the more distinctive of the warblers' songs.

Crane Creek has a convenient, lengthy boardwalk that wanders through a riparian area a few hundred yards from Lake Erie. The trees here are the last stopping point for birds before they make the long journey over water to their breeding grounds in the north. Thus many species are seen in high concentrations, often at eye level. We saw our first Bay-breasted Warblers, Ovenbirds, and White-eyed Vireos. There were herons and ducks feeding in the impoundments and a very cooperative Sora sauntered in the open, close to the boardwalk. There was a roosting Eastern Screech-Owl staked out and we had great looks at Veery and Wood Thrush. White-throated Sparrows of both white and tan phases were abundant, as were Northern Waterthrushes. The habitat was terrific for birders as neither the trees nor the undergrowth were dense and the leaves were still small so early in the season. Probably our best bird was an American Woodcock only a few feet from the boardwalk, resting below eye level.

The next morning brought rain so Joe and I drove around Mau-

mee Bay State Park until it began to clear. The storm was well-timed, keeping the prior day's species at Crane Creek but also bringing some new ones. Many of us spent a good deal of time chasing a male Mourning Warbler, trying to get a good look. Luckily the Cape May, Canada, and Blackpoll Warblers were very easy to find. We added Gray-checked Thrush, Philadelphia and Blue-headed Vireos, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird to our Ohio list. In the afternoon, we drove around the agricultural fields nearby, finding singing Bobolink. The area also had Eastern Kingbirds, a Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrows plus Horned Larks, but we never found the expected Grasshopper Sparrows.

The morning of the 16th was foggy, a good condition for migrants. On the entrance road to Crane Creek, Joe heard, and we subsequently found, our first singing Willow Flycatchers. Jon Dunn and his Wings tour pulled up next to us and we all were able to see the birds well. The boardwalk at Crane Creek was popular this day. There were Amish family groups, with even the children carrying binoculars. Jon indicated that many of the Amish men were great birders. A fellow birder radioed that they were seeing the male Mourning Warbler and this time the bird was very cooperative. Later a beautiful male Cerulean Warbler was found feeding at eye level near the entrance. It sang softly occasionally, to our delight. Word spread rapidly and this sought-after species was well seen at close range by almost everyone. What was most impressive was not the number of species but the wonder of hearing and seeing so many individuals in their striking alternate plumage. It was unforgettable.

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

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Eco-Energy Expo and Solar Home Tour

Sequoia Audubon Society is a co-sponsor of this year's Eco-Energy Expo and Solar Home Tour on Saturday, September 15 in Half Moon Bay. This second annual event is sponsored by Neighbor Share, with about a dozen supporters and/or co-sponsors including the Half Moon Bay Chamber of Commerce, Coastside Democratic Club, League for Coastside Protection, Green Party of San Mateo County, and a variety of non-profit and environmental groups, including SAS. The goals of the event are public education in the areas of renewable energy, recycling, energy efficiency, waste stream and pollution reduction, CO₂ reduction, and buying locally made or grown products. A vendor faire will be held at Half Moon Bay High School from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, and will feature informational presentations on relevant topics. A Solar Home Tour will be held from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, with tours of homes featuring solar electric panels, solar hot water, energy efficient appliances and lighting, home grown vegetables, and native plant landscaping. Representatives of SAS will be present during the vendor faire.



Snowy Plover

THE BIRD BOX
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(Oak Titmouse, continued from page 5)

until they are killed.) Most titmice find a mate in their first fall. Those that do not are excluded from territories and must live in marginal habitats until they find a vacancy. The female lays 3-9 eggs and is the primary incubator. The young are tended by both parents for 16-21 days. Parents continue to tend to young for another three to four weeks after the young leave the nest.

The overall population of Oak Titmice is exhibiting significant long-term decline.

Reference: *The Birds of North America*, No. 485, 2000 by Carla Cicero

(Programs, continued from page 2)

Golden Gate Bridge, and is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Each fall thousands of raptors migrate along the Pacific coast and pass over the Marin Headlands on their way south. Where do 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.

Accompanying field trip: November 10, 2007 to Hawk Hill, Marin Headlands (see Field Trips for full information). Please note there is a \$5 fee for the instructor's time.

Leader: Allen Fish

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.