

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

AUGUST FIELD TRIP will be a request trip to the coast. On the July trip the party voted to go to Santa Cruz the next month to watch shore birds. Grace Brubaker and Emily Smith will lead an all-day trip next Sunday, August 17, 1947, to the lagoons at Twin Lakes, and then north from Santa Cruz for about ten miles and back over the Santa Cruz Mountains by way of Bonnie Doon and Mt. Hermon. In the vicinity of Bonnie Doon there are unusual trees and shrubs for those who enjoy plants as well as birds. Meet in front of the Lyndon Hotel in Los Gatos at 8 o'clock. San Jose members desiring or able to provide transportation meet at corner of E. San Carlos and 5th Streets at 7:30; Palo Alto members at S.P. Depot in Palo Alto at 7:15.

Ralph A. Smith, Pres. - Campbell 3997
Emily Smith, Corr. Sec. - Los Gatos 994-W

ANOTHER FIELD TRIP REPORT, by leaders of the trip:

A second field trip in April was taken with the hope of seeing shore birds at the peak of their migration northward. Twelve members and five guests were ready to start for Alviso at seven in the morning, April 27, 1947. When we reached the marshes, the sky was overcast and there was a chilly wind: also the tide was unfavorable. Although we failed to see a spectacular number of shore birds, the birding was interesting. A short way out on the Los Esteros Rd., which leads into the marshes east of Alviso, we saw, a long way off, a killdeer stealthily leave its nest and with cautious short runs finally reach concealment in a mass of pickleweed. But when we left the road and approached the nest, it came running back almost to our feet, and with broken-wing tactics tried to lead us away from the nest. We stayed only long enough to count the four eggs in a nest which was hardly more than a slight depression in the ground. We saw only the one bird, and at no time did it give any call-notes. In the marshes in the vicinity of the KQW station we saw a large number of shore birds (many of them resting with head tucked under wing), but the number of species was small.

From the marshes we returned to Alviso and went out to the salt ponds just west of the town to see avocet nests spotted by the leaders four days earlier. As we walked out on one of the dikes a snowy plover left its nest, like the killdeer, while we were still a long way off. But, unlike the killdeer, it ran ahead in clear view; soon it was joined by three others, all four charming little birds running so smoothly, far ahead of us, that they seemed to be "rolling along on skates." When we found the nest it was like the killdeer's, with hardly any nesting material to cushion the three protectively colored eggs. After we were well past the nest site the plovers took wing and circled back with soft call-notes. The avocets' nests were also on the ground, but more nesting material had been used. We were distressed to find every egg in all of the dozen or so nests had been broken.

The eggs were quite fresh and very recently broken, and in some of them the contents were scarcely touched. We were unable to determine the cause of the disaster.

As we walked back on the dike we had an excellent opportunity to compare cliff, barn, and violet-green swallows as they skimmed by us, low over the water.

We listed the following birds in the Alviso area: great blue heron, 2; American egret, 6; clapper rail, 1, feeding at edge of slough within 20 feet of us, quite oblivious of our presence; snowy plover, 6; killdeer, 12; black-bellied plover, 3, with black belly; willet, 100+; greater yellow-legs, 2; dowitcher, 40+; western and least sandpipers, large flocks; avocet, 30+; black-necked stilt, 6; northern phalarope, 12; Forster tern, 16; horned lark, 2; violet-green swallow, 4; barn swallow, 4, one pair nest-building under culvert; cliff swallow, 50+, some collecting mud for nests; marsh wren, 2, singing; pipit, 6; yellow-throat, 1, singing; red-winged blackbird, 20+; savannah sparrow, 12, three pairs giving anxious call-notes, apparently nesting.

The trip had been planned for half a day only, but we had time to visit the herony in the eucalyptus grove beside the Guadalupe Creek, just south of Montague Rd. There seemed to be the usual number of American egrets and great blue herons, either nest-building or incubating. We observed a great blue heron come flying in with a twig in its bill and offer it to its mate on the nest. The twig was solemnly accepted and put in place in the nest. The egrets greatly outnumber the great blues and do not seem to be molested in any way by their bigger neighbors.

In the vicinity of the grove the following birds were listed: great blue heron, perhaps 10 pairs (not counted); American egret, perhaps 40 pairs (again not counted); green heron, 2; turkey vulture, 2; (no kites!); sparrow hawk, 2; mourning dove, two pairs; red-shafted flicker, 2; black phoebe, 1; western flycatcher, 1; Bewick wren, 1, singing; mockingbird, 1, singing; robin, 1, carrying food; yellow warbler, 3, singing; chat, 2, singing in tree in full view; pileolated warbler, 2, singing; western meadowlark, 1, singing; red-winged blackbird, 1, singing in small cattail marsh; Bullock oriole, 1, singing; Brewer blackbird, 6, one carrying food into cedar tree; black-headed grosbeak, 2, singing; house finch, several singing; brown towhee, 1, singing; song sparrow, 2, singing and giving anxious call-notes.

Etta Waddington Smith
Emily Smith