



SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

December, 1947

THE REGULAR DECEMBER MEETING will be held Monday evening, Dec. 15, in Room 210, Science Building, San Jose State College. At 7:30 there will be a short business meeting to hear the report of the Screen Tours Committee, and to consider sending another CARE package to N. von Bod<sup>sen</sup>, the European ornithologist. The regular program will begin promptly at 8 o'clock. After reports of bird observations by members, Mr. Oliver C. Applegate, Jr., of San Francisco, will show colored moving pictures of birds, especially nesting Caspian terns, which he took on our field trip to the Dumbarton Bridge area last June.

THE DECEMBER FIELD TRIP will be a Christmas Bird Count and will be taken the Sunday after Christmas, Dec. 28. A bird census at Christmas time is taken annually by many Audubon Societies throughout the United States and Canada. All members are invited to participate in this count. The meeting place is the corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets, San Jose. Please come promptly at 8 a.m., at which time Emily Smith, in charge of the count, will outline the procedure. Mrs. Grace Brubaker has invited the bird counters to come to her home, 191 Mountain View Ave., San Jose, at 4 o'clock, to sum up the count and have a cup of tea. Members who are unable to attend the field trip are invited to come for the summary report and tea at Mrs. Brubaker's home. (Going east out Alum Rock Ave., Mountain View Ave. is to the left, about one mile beyond White Rd.)

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NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP REPORT. The region visited Nov. 16 lies around Searsville Lake, west of Stanford University. This area offers various bird habitats which range from open water for canvas-back ducks to chaparral where wren-tits sing. The upper reaches of the lake are not much more than sloughs this dry year, bordered with mud flats, cattails, and willows; but around the lake proper the shores are steep, except for a sandy beach at the upper end. The western shore slopes upward to a grassy knoll where there are scattered oaks and introduced pines and picnic tables. Across the lake Jasper Ridge ascends abruptly, covered for the most part with chaparral. The day was beautiful, with full sun after the rain of the day before, and the group enjoyed the hike up Jasper Ridge and around the lake. A number of bird happenings on this trip stand out. At our first station on Mountain Home Road by the upper lake we discovered several black-crowned night herons roosting hunched up in brushy willows by the water's edge. Henri Hill's telescope picked out two close together, one showing the streaked brownish plumage of an immature bird and the other, for nice comparison, the gray and black of an adult. A sharp-shinned hawk, first seen chasing a flicker among the willows, came out to circle in tight turns over our heads, with sudden bursts of quick wing beats interrupting its sailing. As we walked into the resort area of Searsville Lake a flock of coots, mallards, and pintails paddled or waddled down the slough, almost as tame as farmyard fowls. The bridge across the channel connecting the upper and lower lakes was a good observation station. The telescope resolved the many ducks on the lake into mallards, pintails, canvas-backs, bald-

pates, shovellers, ring-necked ducks, and ruddy ducks. Wading *near* the sandy beach were two yellow-legs and a least sandpiper. Turning our attention to the cattail marsh on the other side of the bridge, we could hear the call notes of red-winged blackbirds and song sparrows, which were to be expected; but quite unexpected was a burst of brief song from a fox sparrow and the sight of another fox sparrow trying to scratch in the mud. Then we discovered a pied-billed grebe poking about in the scum of a tiny pool. When several members plunged down the bank to take pictures and rescue the bird which didn't have "enough water to take off," they discovered, first, that the mud flat gave insecure footing and, second, that the grebe wasn't stranded. The bird flopped out onto the mud and made ungraceful progress toward the slough. The powerful paddles which make the bird such a torpedo in water are set too far back under the body for efficient transportation on land. Our hero soon upset itself in its haste and lay on its back for some time, flailing the air futilely with its stocky legs, before righting its body to toddle on, with wings flapping, to water. After lunch we found the picnic area very productive of birds. A lone pine by a shack, during a few minutes watching, yielded Bewick wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush, bluebirds, brown towhee, and California jay; while a few feet away a dozen pine siskins fed, in every conceivable attitude, on teasel heads. Following the road up Jasper Ridge, we found birds difficult to see in the dense chaparral, but two fox sparrows did come out onto the road, giving us excellent views of themselves: darkly streaked breast, heavy gray head, rusty rump and tail. At a view point on the road we stopped to look back at the lake. Tucked into a flock of ducks swimming out of a narrow cove was a solitary female hooded merganser. Not many birds were noted on the final ascent through an open grove of blue oak to the rocky field on top of the ridge, but the sight of a fine purple finch on the tiptop of an oak and a striking white-breasted nuthatch searching the limbs of another oak were ample reward for the climb; while further dividends on the summit were many bluebirds, juncos, and Audubon warblers. The path down led into a ravine where there were live oak, madrone, and laurel; and finally to the lower end of the lake, where we crossed the dam and made our way back through the picnic area to our cars.

The following 56 species of birds were listed for the trip: 5 pied-billed grebe, 2 great blue heron, 2 Am. egret, 5 black-crowned night heron, 30+ mallard, 2 baldpate, 40+ Am. pintail, 1 green-winged teal, 12 shoveller, 5 ring-necked duck, 30+ canvas-back, 21 ruddy duck, 1 hooded merganser, 1 sharp-shinned hawk, 2 red-tailed hawk, 3 sparrow hawk, Cal. quail, 100+ Am. coot, 10 killdeer, 4 greater yellow-legs, 2 least sandpiper, 1 belted kingfisher, 12 red-shafted flicker, 6 acorn woodpecker, 2 hairy woodpecker, 4 black phoebe, 5 violet-green swallow, 6 Cal. jay, 3 chestnut-backed chickadee, 6 plain titmouse, 12 bush-tit, 2 white-breasted nuthatch, 3 wren-tit, 3 Bewick wren, 1 Cal. thrasher, 30+ robin, 3 hermit thrush, 20 W. bluebird, 6 ruby-crowned kinglet, 24 cedar waxwing, 3 Hutton vireo, 8 Audubon warbler, 12 W. meadowlark, 6 red-winged and 3 Brewer blackbirds, 1 purple finch, 40+ pine siskin, 5 willow and 6 Ark. goldfinches, 1 spotted and 4 brown towhees, 40+ Ore. junco, small flock of golden-crowned and white-crowned sparrows, 6 fox and 6 song sparrows.

Fifteen members present: Geo. Foreman, B.N. Dickinson and son Robert, Mrs. A.F. Haines, Elsie Hoeck, David Jenkinson, Dr. R.M. Leggett, James G. Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Prusman, Al and Dorothy Wool, Emily Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Charles J. Zwaal, *Mrs. H.A. Weseman*.  
One guest: Neal Phillips,