

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

20
February, 1948
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AN IMPROMPTU FIELD TRIP will be taken this coming Saturday, Feb. 28, to the Dumbarton Bridge area, to explore territory new to us, under the guidance of Mr. Rigby and Mr. Dickinson. There will be an easy hike of about three miles. Meet at the parking area at the east end of the Bridge at 8 a.m. Bring lunch, if you want to bird all day. San Jose members who want to go in caravan meet at the corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 7:15; Palo Alto members at the S. F. Depot in Palo Alto at 7:45.

THE FOURTH SCREEN TOURS LECTURE will be given next Tuesday evening, March 2, in the Montgomery Theatre in the San Jose Civic Auditorium at 8 o'clock. Tom and Arlene Hadley will present their color motion picture story of the "Happy Valley." They found their "happy valley," exploring the rivers, lakes, forests, and dunes in northern Michigan. In this land, famed as the home of Hiawatha, they found poetry and philosophy in trees, wildflowers, birds, and wild animals.

COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF TO EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGISTS. We have not yet received a reply to our letter to the von Bodmans; but Mrs. Hamerstrom writes that Dr. Welty of Beloit College, who has recently returned from relief work in Germany, visited the von Bodmans and will write to us about them. In response to our request for the name of a family who could use clothing already collected but not likely to fit the needs of the v. Bodmans, Mrs. Hamerstrom sent us the name of a family in Frankfurt, in the U.S. Zone. She writes, "Rector Kurt Merkel is an inspired ornithologist. He was formerly in charge of the Breslau Station of the Silesian Ornithologists. When he fled from there he had to leave everything behind. He now lives in pitiful circumstances. His son, also a well-known ornithologist, is still a prisoner of war. His son's wife and child are living with him." Mrs. Hamerstrom then lists their urgent needs:

Mrs. Ilse Merkel, the son's wife, 32 years old, 5' 3" tall and very slender, needs winter coat and stout shoes size 6
Wulf Merkel, her boy of 5, needs warm winter clothing, especially a coat and shoes to wear out doors
Rector Kurt Merkel, 5' 7", waist 36", needs a warm suit, a warm sweater, and stout shoes size 10

At the end of her letter Mrs. Hamerstrom says they need food and all sorts of clothing. If you have anything you can donate to this family, let us know by phone or card, and we will come to your house for it; or we could receive small bundles at the Montgomery Theatre box office next Tuesday evening.

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FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP REPORT. February 15, 1948, very early in the morning, seventeen members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society journeyed to Los Banos. After an 8 o'clock breakfast at Tiny's, we drove out to the Bird and Game Reservation north of Los Banos. Everywhere the fields were brown, because of the worst drought since records have been kept, and water was low in the sloughs. But the day was perfect for birding -- almost no wind, pleasantly warm, and the blue sky traced over with beautiful cirrus clouds. Just before reaching the reservation, we stopped to watch 20 honkers come flying high over the field and settle down to join many more Canada geese, barely visible in the brown grass. Then we noticed a

flock of 50 dowitchers probing busily in a shallow pond, and in the surrounding fields many pipits. At the Reservation Mr. Wattenberger, who is in charge there, obligingly led our caravan over roads which wind throughout most of the 3,000-acre reservation. The sloughs and many small ponds apparently contained enough water to attract many waterfowl, and along the edges of the water spots were some "greens," mostly clover and planted millet. We would drive but a short distance, and then 50 or more snow geese would fly up, or white pelicans sail into view, or a bittern rise out of the tules and fly off with slow wing beats. All day we were stopping for one thrill after another. Everywhere marsh hawks were flying low over the ground; we saw one, in pale gray plumage, going through his courting antics of power dives and perpendicular climbs, and then successive loops, rolling over at the top of each loop. There were many ducks, of at least nine different species, the outstanding being a male buffle-head in full plumage. We were glad to hear Mr. Wattenberger say that during the past duck-hunting season thousands of ducks sought refuge in the reservation. Occasionally we sighted large flocks of geese, but they were usually far away; once, disturbed by a plane, thousands of geese formed long wavering ink lines against the distant sky. Most of all, on this trip to Los Banos, we wanted to see sandhill cranes. Suddenly we heard, far off, a clamor of rolling, sonorous calls, unlike the calls of geese or any other bird we had ever known and once heard, never to be mistaken. Soon 20 cranes came into view, finally passing high overhead in rhythmical flight, their necks outstretched and long legs trailing straight out behind. Later we saw more cranes, perhaps 150, in four groups. We were amused to see a lone white pelican apparently leading the flight of a group of 40 cranes, and as they circled lazily high above us we noted that the pelican had a distinctly greater wing spread. Some of the cranes dropped out of the sky to join a group of their fellows which were standing in a distant swale. These would glide downward, flapping their wings only as they "lowered their landing gear," perhaps 50 ft. above ground. But after all, it was the geese which gave us the greatest thrill of all. In mid-afternoon, as we approached a large pond, several thousand geese (Canada, white-fronted, and snow) suddenly rose with such a whir of wings and such a clamor of voices that the earth seemed almost to shake for an instant. Gee! let's all return to Los Banos next duck-hunting season when, as Mr. Wattenberger assured us, we might well see two million wild fowl!!!

The following birds made up our list for the Reservation and close vicinity: white pelican, 30; double-crested cormorant, 6; great blue heron, 4; Am. egret, 1; snowy egret, 3; black-crowned night heron, 3; Am. bittern, 6; whistling swan, 1; Canada goose, white-fronted goose, snow goose; mallard, cinnamon and green-winged teal, pintail, baldpate, gadwall, shoveller (commonest duck), buffle-head, ruddy duck; red-tailed hawk, 5+; marsh hawk, 12+; sparrow hawk, 2; ring-necked pheasant, 5; sandhill crane (little brown is subspecies of sandhill), 150; Fla. gallinule, 1; Am. coot, many; killdeer, 8; Wilson snipe, 2; Hudsonian curlew, 3; greater yellow-legs, 2; least sandpiper, 1; dowitcher, 50; avocet, 1; Cal. gull, 5; barn owl, 1; burrowing owl, 2; Anna hummingbird, 1; red-shafted flicker and Nuttall woodpeckers in clump of willows; black phoebe, 2; tree swallow, 3; marsh wren, 3; mockingbird, 2; ruby-crowned kinglet, 2; Am. pipit, many; loggerhead shrike, 3; Audubon warbler, 12+; yellow-throat, 1; W. meadowlark, 9+; redwinged and Brewer blackbirds, many; Am. goldfinch, 20; savannah sparrow, 20+; white-crowned sparrow, 50+; song sparrow, 3.

Albert J. Wool