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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

March, 1948

A SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING will be held next Monday evening, March 15, at 8 o'clock, in Room 210, Natural Science Building, San Jose State College. The meeting is being called to decide whether or not the Society will sponsor another series of Audubon Screen Tours lectures next year. There will be other business to transact, including the question of relief for European ornithologists. An announcement of the summer sessions of the newly organized Audubon Nature Camp of California has come; also a letter from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, asking the Society to cooperate in the accumulation of information on the distribution, migration, and abundance of North American birds. After the business session there will be time for members to report seasonal bird observations, of which we have not had enough this year.

THE MARCH FIELD TRIP will be taken this next Sunday, March 14, to hills near Los Gatos, with Clyde and Agnes Prusman as leaders. The meeting place will be on the San Jose-Los Gatos Road (Highway 17) at Shannon Road, about half a mile northeast of Los Gatos city limits, at 8 o'clock. San Jose members who want to go in caravan meet at the corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 7:30; Palo Alto members at the S. P. Depot in Palo Alto at 7:15. This will be not much more than a half day trip - two short hikes and between the hikes a mid-morning breakfast in the Prusmans' patio. Bring bacon and eggs (or whatever you like) to cook on the grill; and Agnes will have coffee for us.

Ralph A. Smith, President

Emily Smith, Corr. Sec. - Route 1, Box 387, Los Gatos
Phone Los Gatos 994-W

THE FEBRUARY 28th FIELD TRIP to the Dumbarton Bridge area proved very worthwhile for the party of twelve who braved a strong, cold northwest wind. A four-mile hike from where we parked our cars on the east side of the bay, brought us to the east end of the bridge. This area is extensively diked into evaporation pools by the Leslie Salt Co. These dikes and pools, along with the tidal flats and pools of the Newark Slough, make ideal feeding and loafing ground for many species of waterfowl and shore birds. As we approached the bridge, pools on both sides of the road contained scattered flocks of shovellers and eared grebes, one flock of the latter species numbering over two hundred birds.

The most interesting aspect of the trip was the opportunity to observe the cycle of shore bird movement in relation to the tide. A low tide at 9:30 a.m. exposed vast areas of mud flats along the east side of the bay, above and below the bridge. These uncovered feeding grounds had drawn most of the

shore birds from the inland pools, so that we saw very few shore birds as we walked along the road leading to the bridge. But from a vantage point on the bay dike we could see thousands of birds feeding near the water's edge, perhaps a third of a mile out from the dike. The rising tide, slowly at first and then more rapidly, brought the birds back, closer and closer to us, until finally excellent sights were obtained of most of the species. The finest experience of the day came as the flood tide forced the birds to abandon the bay and move inland. In front of the advancing tide, as it covered the last of the mud flat, the birds rose into the air, one flock after another. We stood enthralled as mixed flocks of godwits, curlews, black-bellied plovers, dowitchers, red-backed sandpipers, least sandpipers, and Western sandpipers flew over our heads, sometimes so close we could hear the swish of their wings.

A picnic lunch was enjoyed in a sheltered nook of the Coyote Hills, where the wind could not reach us. Here several land birds were seen, and, sailing overhead, a lone white pelican. Later, from the hillside overlooking the Newark Slough, a single snowy egret was seen.

Returning across the bridge, on our way home, we saw several kinds of diving ducks bobbing on the wind-whipped waters of the bay: canvas-backs, golden-eyes, scaups, and a female buffle-head. Among these ducks were several Western grebes. A little later we identified two more species of grebes for our list of birds in the Dumbarton Bridge area. On the Ravenswood Slough was a flock of ten horned grebes in various stages of plumage, ranging from typical winter to partial breeding plumage; and not far from these horned grebes were three pied-bills.

The following list summarizes the species observed on this trip: horned grebe, 10; eared grebe, 250+; Western grebe, 12; pied-billed grebe, 3; white pelican, 1; double-crested cormorant, 7; great blue heron, 4; snowy egret, 1; American egret, 3; pintail, 12; green-winged teal, 3; shoveller, 500+; canvas-back, 50; lesser scaup duck, 100+; American golden-eye, 9; buffle-head, 1; surf scoter, 1; turkey vulture, 1; red-tailed hawk, 1; coot, 7; killdeer, 2; black-bellied plover, 50+; long-billed curlew, 10; Hudsonian curlew, 12; willet, 200+; greater yellow-legs, 4; "peep" sandpipers, 200+ (80% least, 20% Western); red-backed sandpiper, 1000+; dowitcher, 15; marbled godwit, 1000+; avocet, 20; herring gull, 3; California gull, 2; ring-billed gull, 6; burrowing owl, 2; black phoebe, 1; American pipit, 6; Audubon warbler, 1; yellow-throat, 1; Western meadowlark, 1; Brewer blackbird, 25; house finch, 4; savannah sparrow, 24 (several singing); white-crowned sparrow, 8; song sparrow, 5 (one singing).

Members of the party: Mrs. Arntzen and Sally, Mr. Curt Dietz, Mr. George Foreman, Mrs. Pearl Harwood, Mrs. Ruth Paulus, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Frusman, Mr. C.L. Sleeper, Miss Emily Smith; B.N. Dickinson and James P. Rigby, leaders.

James P. Rigby