

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

October, 1948

THE REGULAR OCTOBER MEETING will be held this coming Wednesday evening, Oct. 27, in Palo Alto at the home of Mrs. E.I. Miller, 159 Melville Av., at 7:45 o'clock. Neil Dickinson, who will have just returned from a trip East, will give an account of his visit to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. But preceding his talk there will be half an hour for reports of seasonal bird observations by members. (When did you see cedar waxwings for the first time this fall? How many were there?) Please bring observations in writing, giving date and place of observation. San Jose members who want to go in caravan to Mrs. Miller's home meet promptly at corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 7 o'clock.

THE OCTOBER FIELD TRIP will be taken the following Sunday, October 31, to the Los Banos Bird and Game Reservation, under the leadership of Al and Dorothy Wool. This trip is being taken in the duck hunting season because greater numbers of waterfowl come into the Reservation during this time. The meeting place for the trip will be Tiny's Restaurant in Los Banos, on Highway 152, at 8 o'clock for breakfast. Bring lunch and warm wraps. San Jose members who can take additional passengers or who want transportation, phone the Wools, Mayfair 3104; Palo Alto members phone the B.N. Dickinsons, Davenport 2-3674.

B. Neil Dickinson, Pres. - 1135 Crane St., Menlo Park
Emily Smith, Corr. Sec. - 387 Glen Una Dr., Los Gatos

JULY FIELD TRIP REPORT. On Sunday, July 25, some twenty members of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society assembled at the Los Gatos Railroad Depot at six o'clock in the morning. The objective of this trip was to observe the birds in their native habitats in and about the Mt. Hermon area.

The party proceeded up the Los Gatos-Santa Cruz Highway, where a stop was made at the summit to observe the heavy blanket of fog which lay at a lower elevation, forming bays, inlets, and islands to suit the imagination. Birds observed at this point were the spotted towhee, junco, chickadee, wren-tit, and purple martin. The second stop was made soon after turning onto the Glenwood Road. Purple martins sailed overhead or rested on the snags of a tall, dead tree, which could have been their home, and which had certainly been the home and storehouse of the California woodpecker. A pair of Western wood pewees were giving alarm notes to their young, very recently out of the nest, while near-by a pair of brown towhees preened nonchalantly. A third stop was made in a canyon near Glenwood, where we listened to the thrilling song of the hermit thrush. A kingfisher flew overhead uttering its rattling call, as ash-throated, olive-sided, and Western flycatchers, and Hutton, warbling, and solitary vireos added their bit to the enchanting chorus. An Allen hummer buzzed in to add dash and color.

In Scott Valley we had an added thrill in the discovery of nesting cliff swallows, whose juglike homes were plastered to the eaves of the house, barn, and milk shed of a dairy farm. Many had young in them. Swallows were on the wires and in the air, and upon close observation, we found that violet-green and barn swallows were present among the cliff swallows. Two other observations of interest gave this stop top billing: a Western bluebird fed young still in their nest, and a Cooper hawk flew in and then out of a near-by tree.

Finally we reached our objective, the swampy "Lake" in Mount Hermon. We were delighted to find the russet-backed thrush in full and beautiful song; but the absence of the song of the pileolated warbler and the imperfect song of the warbling vireo, reminded us that the summer's nesting was drawing to a close. Mrs. Boylan joined our group here and led us down the Bean Creek Trail. After a brief lunch beside the trail, we proceeded to Bean Creek, whose musical waters flow through troughs of finest slate. Along the shaded banks we heard high, thin notes which sounded like the calls of young creepers; but it was a family of winter wrens we finally spotted, little brown, mouselike birds, slipping in and out among the moss and debris of the stream bank. We had marvelous observation of these birds: a parent busily feeding six hungry youngsters whose mouths still had the yellow of their infancy, and all the time she (or was it he?) was trying to get the six of them out of our sight. It was a proper finis to a successful birding trip, and was truly a thrilling sight!

The total number of species identified was forty-six: Cooper hawk, Cal. quail, killdeer, mourning dove, Anna hummingbird, Allen hummingbird, belted kingfisher, red-shafted flicker, Cal. woodpecker, downy woodpecker, ash-throated flycatcher, black phoebe, W. flycatcher, wood pewee, olive-sided flycatcher, violet-green swallow, barn swallow, cliff swallow, purple martin, Steller jay, Cal. jay, chestnut-backed chickadee, pigmy nut hatch, brown creeper, wren-tit, winter wren, Bewick wren, robin, hermit thrush, russet-backed thrush, W. bluebird, Hutton vireo, solitary vireo, warbling vireo, pileolated warbler, red-winged blackbird, Brewer blackbird, W. tanager, black-headed grosbeak, purple finch, house finch, green backed goldfinch, spotted towhee, brown towhee, Ore. junco, song sparrow.

Beatrice Wise Nielsen

SEPTEMBER 12 FIELD TRIP REPORT. At the conclusion of a successful birding trip to the Dumbarton Bridge area, the leader and two other members went into a huddle. The result was my invitation to serve as historian for this trip. Could it be that the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has started initiating its neophytes?

Those of us who motored from San Jose were confronted with a soupy ground fog, and birding prospects did not look too promising. However by the time we reached the bridge area the atmosphere was clear. According to those, among the ten present, who had made the pilgrimage here before, we were favored with unusually calm, pleasant weather.

Mr. Rigby, as leader, started the group on its tour at the east end of the Dumbarton Bridge road in the vicinity of Newark slough. His sharp eyes detected yellow-throats working among marsh grasses near the water's edge. Just beyond, a black phoebe darted here and there in quest of its morning meal. Several song sparrows made their presence known as they hastily retreated in the path of our advance. On high ground above the slough, where we could view a wide expanse, Mr. Hill's telescope was set up, and we easily identified the flock of white birds resting on a distant spit of land as white pelicans, and the dark birds among them as cormorants. Along the muddy borders of the sloughs were several kinds of shore birds, an egret, and two great blue herons; and crossing and recrossing our area of vision were flights of ducks, Forster terns fishing on the wing, and occasional gulls. Before we left our hillside vantage point another flock of white pelicans landed farther out on the spit; and, surprisingly, a white-breasted nuthatch called from a clump of eucalyptus behind us. As we returned to the road, your historian saw a yellow-throat in erratic flight and heard its flight song.

The promise of seeing phalaropes drew us westward to the KGO transmitter station. This area abounded with bird life. Scores of barn swallows soared and sailed about us, or lined up on the wires. The water in the Leslie Salt Company evaporation pools seemed alive with both birds and salt marsh flies, the latter apparently one of the reasons for the presence of the former. Hundreds of Northern phalaropes were bobbing on the smooth water, dabbling right and left, in their customary nervous fashion, at the millions of flies on the surface. Diligent scanning of the phalaropes failed to produce either red phalarope or Wilson phalarope. Here in this area we had an opportunity to see "peeps" in flock flight, all the birds twisting, turning as one bird, now flashing brilliant white, now all dark.

From the radio station our course took us along the road toward the Dumbarton Bridge itself, Mr. Rigby leading with his spotting scope. It was not long before he was pointing out a wandering tattler, a new bird for most of us! It was resting on a rock close to the road, far from the rocky ocean shores it prefers. After we all had observed its yellow legs and plain gray back -- no barring on the underparts indicated fall and winter plumage -- it obligingly flew by us, showing the proper lack of pattern in flight. Soon after this, quite appropriately, we saw twenty or more black turnstones crowded on a rocky ledge projecting above the quiet water of an evaporation pool. As more turnstones came flying to the ledge we could see their distinctive wing pattern. Near the bridge, where we had paused to observe a group of avocets, we were surprised to see one avocet still wearing the cinnamon brown of its breeding plumage.

Just before reaching the bridge, where the tide was high, Mr. Rigby turned off the road and led us out on a dike running south, promising shore birds which we had not yet seen. Within a short time his promise was fulfilled. First there were semipalmated plovers in a group of Western sandpipers; then a goodly number of godwits in a large flock of willets, loafing in ~~else~~ close company on the dike, some distance in front of us. No doubt they were waiting for the tide to run out under the bridge and uncover the mud flats. Setting up the telescope, we scanned this mass of bird life for new birds for our list, finally spotting several curlews. When we moved closer for better observation, there was a sudden mass exodus, as the birds took to the air to seek less populous areas. It was after one o'clock when we returned to the road and started our trek back to the cars. Along the way a final success came to us when we saw a ruddy turnstone at close range. One of the little fellow's orange legs had been injured and that fact probably accounted for our being able to approach it so closely.

A summary of the species observed is as follows: eared grebe, 6; pied-billed grebe, 3; white pelican, 100+; double-crested cormorant, 30+; great blue heron, 3; Am. egret, 2; Am. pintail, 200+; shoveller, 200+; semipalmated plover, 6; killdeer, 8; black-bellied plover, 25; ruddy turnstone, 1; black turnstone, 33; long-billed curlew, 6; Hudsonian curlew, 1; wandering tattler, 1; willet, 350+; greater yellow-legs, 2; least sandpiper, 150+; dowitcher, 12; Western sandpiper, 30+; marbled godwit, 120+; avocet, 48; Northern phalarope, 1,000±; glaucous-winged gull, 1; ring-billed gull, 12; Forster tern, 130; Caspian tern, 1; black phoebe, 1; barn swallow, 26; white-breasted nuthatch, 1; yellowthroat, 14; English sparrow, 6; Western meadowlark, 1; Brewer blackbird, 80+; savannah sparrow, 20+; song sparrow, 18.

Wilbur F. Luick

CALENDAR, 1948-1949

- Oct. 7 Screen Tour, Karl Maslowski, "Saguaroland"
 Oct. 27 Informal meeting, Palo Alto, Mr. Neil Dickinson
 Oct. 31 Field trip to Los Banos Bird and Game Reservation,
 Al and Dorothy Wool
- Nov. 10 Informal meeting, San Jose, Dr. William Graf
 Nov. 20 (Saturday) Field trip to Crystal Springs Lake, Pigeon Point,
 and Anno Nuevo Point, Jim Rigby
 Nov. 26 Screen Tour, William Ferguson, "This Curious World in Nature"
- Dec. 13 Informal meeting, Palo Alto, Mr. Albert Wool
- Annual Christmas Bird Count
- Jan. 17 Screen Tour, Carl Buchheister, "Wild Life Down East"
 Jan. 24 Meeting of the Board of Directors and Committee Chairmen
 Jan. 29 (Saturday) Field trip to Monterey, Jim Rigby
- Feb. 14 Regular meeting, San Jose, Mr. Donald McLean?
 Feb. 19 (Saturday) Field trip in the Palo Alto region
- Mar. 4 Screen Tour, Allen Cruickshank, "Trails for the Millions"
 Mar. 14 Informal meeting, Palo Alto
 Mar. 20 Field trip to Blossom Hill, near Los Gatos,
 Clyde and Agnes Frusman
- Apr. 7 Screen Tour, Rev. George Link, "Alluring Alaska"
 Apr. 10 Field trip to Silver Creek Hills, for both birds and flowers
 Apr. 18 Informal meeting, San Jose
 Apr. 23 and 24 Overnight field trip to Pinnacles National Monument,
 Neil and Oleta Dickinson
- May 8 Field trip to Alum Rock Park, for early morning bird chorus,
 Charles and Fanny Zwaal
 May 9 Regular meeting, Palo Alto, Mr. Oliver C. Applegate, Jr.
 May 15 Field trip to Wool Ranch, for unusual nesting birds,
 Al and Dorothy Wool
 May 22 Joint field trip with Audubon Association of the Pacific, *to Livermore*
Can. George and Beatrice Nielsen *to see nesting Phainopepla*
- June 13 Annual picnic meeting in Alum Rock Park
 June 19 Field trip to egret herony near Montague Road, and to Alviso,
 Ann Peterson and Grace Brubaker
- July 9 (Saturday) Field trip to coast near Davenport, Emily Smith
 July 30 ?
- Aug. 27 (Saturday) Field trip to the Dumbarton Bridge area,
 Jim Rigby
- Sept. 12 Regular meeting, San Jose
 Sept. 18 Field trip to Bay Farm Island, for shore birds

Beatrice W. Nielsen, James P. Rigby
 Field Trip Committee

Oleta Dickinson, Albert Wool
Program Committee