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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

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April, 1949

A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS and Committee Chairmen will be held next Monday evening, April 18, at 7:30 o'clock in Room 206, Natural Science Building, San Jose State College. This meeting will replace the informal meeting which was scheduled for that date on our Calendar. The Board meetings are always open to all members of the Society who care to attend. On the agenda for the meeting is the question of the Society's becoming a branch of the National Audubon Society. The Board wants an expression of opinion from as many members as possible, before making a recommendation to the Society concerning the proposed change in its membership status. Any member who is interested in attending the meeting will be very welcome.

THE FIELD TRIP TO THE PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT will be taken the week-end of April 23 and 24, under the leadership of Neil and Oleta Dickinson. This trip can be either an overnight trip or just a Sunday trip. In the Monument there are good public camp grounds (fireplaces, tables and benches, piped water, and restrooms); but the Dickinsons found that the Lodge is not in operation, which means no cabins, meals, or groceries. If you are planning to camp Saturday night and would like to join with others for meals, phone Mrs. B.N. Dickinson in Menlo Park, or Mrs. Lester H. Brubaker in San Jose, or Miss Emily Smith in Los Gatos. Mrs. Dickinson will be glad to plan Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast for a group, but she must know by Monday noon (April 18) how many want to participate, so that she can let each one know in time what to bring as his share of the meals. There will be a Saturday afternoon walk, starting at 2 o'clock from the Ranger Station, and the Sunday walk will start from the same place at 8 o'clock in the morning. The mileage from San Jose to the Pinnacles is about 85 miles.

B. Neil Dickinson, Pres. - 1135 Crane St., Menlo Park
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FEBRUARY 19 FIELD TRIP REPORT. The morning was not too encouraging when seventeen members and ten guests met at the Depot in Palo Alto at 8 o'clock. By the time our caravan reached the City Dump, where we were to look for shore birds on the mud flats, everything was shrouded in fog. The few birds we could see were no more than gray silhouettes, which only the experts could name: willets, red-backed sandpipers, Western sandpipers, marbled godwits, black-bellied plovers, a dowitcher, and a lone avocet. When the fog thinned a little, we could see canvas-backs and scaup ducks out on the water beyond the mud flats. Close to us, among the discarded furniture and blasted oak roots on the dump, were several song sparrows singing cheerfully, a Savannah sparrow or two, house finches, several pipits, and an Audubon's warbler. Though not the sort of morning we had hoped for, we decided that the fog had lent needed enchantment to the scene.

Our next stop was at the Stanfords' mausoleum on the campus. By now the sun was dispersing the fog, and our chances for good birding were

improving. A tour of this wooded area afforded us quite different birds. A spotted towhee gave its explosive trill from a dense thicket, and further on we heard the more melodious trill of a junco. Good views of brown towhee, hermit thrush, Audubon's warbler, and a pair of California thrashers rewarded our walk through damp grass. Bordering the wooded area was a ploughed field which was providing good feeding for many Brewer's blackbirds, pipits, killdeer, robins, Oregon juncos, a red-shafted flicker, and even a varied thrush. As we left the grove of oaks, a covey of California quail ran to cover, and a red-shafted flicker and a California jay flew by, flashing bright color. We followed the road, skirting the ploughed field, toward the barn. Overhead a turkey vulture was soaring, while a sparrow hawk surveyed the field from a fence post. Meadowlarks were singing from more than one fence post, and in brush at the edge of the field a Bewick's wren sang two or three times. Near the barn we noted a small flock of English sparrows, several house finches, and a few Arkansas goldfinches; and in the barnyard--of all places!--six varied thrushes. But the great thrill of this area was an exceptionally brilliant Western bluebird. It seemed like a bit of the sky itself come to earth. With two duller bluebirds it was catching insects near the barn, in company with an elegant black phoebe and two Audubon's warblers.

We decided to meet next at Lake Lagunita, where we would eat our lunches before proceeding to Searsville. Before coming together for lunch on the boathouse deck, however, we would bird in groups around the lake for half an hour. The pooled reports of the various groups added the following birds to our list: many pintails, 8 green-winged teals, 2 ring-necked ducks, 12 canvas-backs, 8 lesser scaup ducks, 2 female buffle-heads, many ruddy ducks, many coots, a Wilson's snipe, 4 band-tailed pigeons, a belted kingfisher, 2 loggerhead shrikes, 8 acorn woodpeckers, and several Western meadowlarks. As we enjoyed our lunches together in the sunshine, a number of ring-billed gulls on the far side of the lake pursued the most astonishing maneuvers in the air, soaring and diving in swift succession.

By the time we reached Searsville a strong wind had come up. Though the lake was full, even running over the dam, there were disappointingly few waterfowl: 2 pied-billed grebes, 7 shovellers, 2 canvas-backs, 23 ruddy ducks, and about 30 coots. Most of the party made a complete tour of the upper lake. Along the trail our interest was divided between birds and native shrubs. Near the dam we were delighted to find the rare leatherwood (Dirca occidentalis) putting forth yellow bell-like flowers, in the manner of forsythia. Of the birds we saw along the way, the most interesting were a dozen pine siskins feeding on teasel heads, seven or eight fox sparrows scratching under brush; and last, but not least, a brightly colored male myrtle warbler, whose distinctive call note and clear white throat provided sure identification. In addition we listed a great blue heron, an immature Cooper's hawk, a red-tailed hawk, two red-shafted flickers, several acorn woodpeckers, a black phoebe, several chestnut-backed chickadees and plain titmice, two white-breasted nuthatches, a wren-tit, a Bewick's wren, several robins and Western bluebirds, a ruby-crowned kinglet, several Western meadowlarks and redwinged blackbirds, house finches, four brown towhees, a small flock of juncos, a few white-crowned and golden-crowned sparrows, and three or four song sparrows. All in all, there were sixty-one species of birds for the day.