

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

May, 1949

THE MAY FIELD TRIP TO ALUM ROCK PARK will be taken next Sunday, May 8, with Charles and Fanny Zwaal as leaders. Birding is always interesting in this beautiful park, but especially in May and early in the morning. Meet at corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Miguelito Ave., by the San Jose Country Club golf grounds, at 7 a.m. This will be a half day trip—Alum Rock Park may be crowded in the afternoon—and so a picnic lunch will not be necessary; but because of the early meeting hour a midmorning snack might be a good idea. San Jose members who can take passengers and those who need transportation, meet at corner of San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 6:45; Palo Alto members at the S. P. Depot at 6:15.

CHANGES IN DATES. The regular May meeting in Palo Alto has been postponed from May 9 to May 16; and the May 15 field trip to the Wool Ranch has been postponed to May 22. The scheduled May 22 field trip to Livermore Canyon has been cancelled. Notice of the meeting and field trip will be mailed next week.

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

MARCH FIELD TRIP REPORT. The Sunday of March 20, coming after days of rain, was a beautiful day, with brilliant cumulus clouds in a blue sky. Nineteen members and eight guests met together at the Prusman home on Shannon Road, near Los Gatos, where they were greeted with bird songs which invited immediate birding. A buzzy trill, repeated with monotonous persistence from top of a tree, showed a handsome spotted towhee; and in the blackberry tangle, in clear view, a song sparrow was singing its more sprightly song. We soon found the Bewick's wren which was singing in the garden, and the purple finch in a blossoming apricot tree.

From the Prusman home we followed an old road which wound its way beside a little creek and then up a grassy hill where there were scattered oaks. It was the same road along which we had birded so successfully in mid-March a year ago, but the birds were unaccountably few this year. Where there had been a dozen birds singing last year, we heard only two or three singers. However we had some good observations. Unexpectedly, quite close to us, we saw two motionless thrashers in a leafless tree. After a little we noticed that their tails jerked slightly and that there was a faint ruffling of their throat feathers. Listening intently we discovered that the two thrashers were "whispering to each other." Farther on we watched the exciting power dive of a male Anna's hummingbird. It mounted straight up until almost lost to sight, then dived downward at tremendous speed. As it pulled out of its dive it let out a yell, as a good aviator should (or was it air whistling through wing feathers which made the sound?); then it rose a short distance and hovered while it delivered its squeaky song. This entire performance was repeated several times before we found the object of its attention, perched quietly in a tall shrub—not a female, as we had supposed, but another male Anna's hummingbird! When we finally reached the top of the hill, where we could look out over a grove of oaks, a flock of about thirty band-tailed pigeons suddenly rose above the trees. As they circled about we could occasionally hear the noise of their flapping wings, and some one remarked it was less musical than that of the mourn-

ing dove. When the pigeons, with spread tails, settled again in the oaks, the band on their tails showed clearly.

Before eleven o'clock we returned to the Prusman patio to cook our various brunches and enjoy much good fellowship. Going over our bird notes we found that we had seen during our morning stroll thirty-four species of birds, but that most of the species had been represented by not more than one, two, or three individuals: red-tailed hawk, sparrow hawk, a flock of California quail, a flock of band-tailed pigeons, Anna's hummingbird, Allen's hummingbird, red-shafted flicker, acorn woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, eight violet-green swallows, California jay, plain titmouse, a small flock of bush-tits (also a bush-tit carrying nesting material), white-breasted nuthatch, wren-tit, Bewick's wren, pair of California thrashers, robin, varied thrush, hermit thrush, pair of Western bluebirds, ruby-crowned kinglet, Hutton's vireo, orange-crowned warbler, Audubon's warbler, Western meadowlark, purple finch, house finch, spotted towhee, brown towhee, Oregon junco, a small flock of white-crowned sparrows and another of golden-crowned sparrows, and five song sparrows.

After noon, having decided to go farther afield, we drove over the hill, bright with yellow mustard in the blossoming apricot orchards, to the Guadalupe Creek, and followed Coleman Road to its junction with the Almaden Road. Two stops on Coleman Road netted us seven turkey vultures, one each of sharp-shinned, red-tailed, and sparrow hawks, a black phoebe, a dozen or more violet-green swallows, five or six Western bluebirds, a flock of pipits, a loggerhead shrike, a very large flock of Brewer's blackbirds, a flock of Arkansas goldfinches, and feeding in same field with the goldfinches, a flock of about twenty pretty lark sparrows.

A strong wind had come up which was making birding difficult, but after the party broke up at the Almaden Road, half a dozen "die-hards" crawled under the wire fence and walked across the gravelly bed of the Guadalupe Creek to the water conservation ponds. Many violet-green swallows, flying northward, were skimming so low over the shallow water that the beautiful green on their backs could be seen, and sometimes the violet on their wings. Among the swallows two rough-winged swallows were detected, and then a barn swallow. Across a pond a yellow-legs was seen probing along the edge; and not far from it, on the gravelly ground bordering the pond, two killdeer, one of them squatting on the ground. To find out whether it was sitting on eggs, the party worked its way around the pond, trying to keep an eye on the squatting bird. But the bird had left, unnoticed, while the intruders were still a long way off. When they approached the spot where the killdeer had been squatting (a very slight hummock marked the spot), only one killdeer was in view, and it was making short runs away, without outcry or crippled-bird display. On the slight elevation were four eggs, looking like the pebbles around them. The conspicuously marked killdeer had tried to conceal its protectively colored eggs by furtively abandoning them. On our way back to the road Neil Dickinson's quick eye foiled another bird's effort at concealment. He spotted a Wilson's snipe crouching motionless in dead grass by the pond. The stripes on its back and upturned head blended so perfectly with the brown grass stems that it was some time before the others could see it. Finally, when they approached too close, the snipe suddenly zigzagged off in rapid flight. Back on the Almaden Road, not far from Coleman Road, a Lewis's woodpecker was seen on a telephone pole. And as a last thrill, a Bullock's oriole, an early spring arrival from the south, flashed bright orange as it flew across the road.