

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

May, 1949

THE REGULAR MAY MEETING will be held next Monday evening, May 16, in Palo Alto at the Palo Alto Union High School, at the corner of El Camino Real (U.S. Highway 101) and the Embarcadero Road. The meeting is set for 8 o'clock, in Room 146.

The program will be informal, with the usual reports by members of their seasonal observations of birds. We are fortunate that again Mr. John Harville can be our speaker, and will show colored slides.

After the program there will be a short annual business meeting, to elect officers and directors for the coming year.

THE MAY FIELD TRIP TO THE WOOL RANCH and to the Calaveras Reservoir country, will be taken the following Sunday, May 22. Al Wool is sure to have an eagle's nest to show us, and plenty of other nests along the way. (No, Dorothy will be busy with Susan Ann, and can't be co-leader this time.) Meet in Milpitas at 8 a.m., at the junction of the Calaveras Road with the main highway (State Highway 17). This will be an all-day auto trip, with short walks at various stops. Bring picnic lunch. San Jose members who want transportation meet at corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 7:30, and Palo Alto members at the S. P. Depot at 7:15.

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

APRIL 10 FIELD TRIP REPORT. On one of the more beautiful of early spring days, our annual trip to San Felipe Valley took place. Thirty-two members and guests of the Audubon Society were in the caravan which left the San Jose Campus at eight o'clock.

On King Road, opposite the airport, the lead car braked to a stop. A large field was being tractored, and what should our wondering eyes behold but a field full of shore birds! Closer examination gave 36 black-bellied plover, most of them in full breeding plumage. Some of us had never seen these winter visitants in their spring suits and didn't recognize them at first. Feeding with the plover were 40 Hudsonian curlews and half as many gulls. Mr. Dickinson's scope identified ring-billed and California gulls before the tractor stirred them up. Also in the field were killdeer and pipits. Across the road in a grassy meadow, with barn, were the inevitable cliff swallows, Brewer's blackbirds, and red-winged blackbirds. A few lark sparrows sat on the fence, and a meadowlark sang in the distance.

The San Felipe Road is beautiful in spring. Large patches of Johnny-jump-ups; clumps of trillium; lupines, mustard; even pink carpets of the gilia-like filaree enticed us to stop and look. And at each stop every bush and tree seemed to hold a singing bird.

Near the Costa Ranch Mr. Tourtillott joined the party and used his open-sesame on the gates. On the top of the hill, overlooking a sweep of Coast Range, we added the following birds to our list: Oregon junco, house finch, spotted towhee, plain titmouse, lazuli bunting (first for the season), and blue-gray gnatcatcher. The heavenly blue of the Western bluebird and the breath-taking color of a Bullock's oriole held the neophytes' interest, while the more advanced birders attempted to learn the songs which a solitary vireo and an orange-crowned warbler were singing. (O me, I still can't be sure!)

Through the gate and around and down brought us to Lost Valley, complete with stream, house, barn, and picnic area in the shade of oaks. Our bird list and our confusion grew apace. Now the warbling vireo was singing, and a yellow warbler, and pileolated warbler, and house wren, and Bewick's wren! It was a relief to hear the familiar chatter of a ruby-crowned kinglet, and the "three blind mice" of a golden-crowned sparrow. A Western wood pewee (an early first for the season) and its small cousin Western flycatcher went down on our list. A picnic table produced a Steller's jay; an oak, acorn woodpeckers; the stream, a black phoebe flycatching and Arkansas goldfinches bathing; underbrush, a California quail calling; a barnyard, brown towhees; a wide blue sky, turkey vultures soaring and sailing. A few fortunate ones saw a black-throated gray warbler. On the way in Mr. Hill, who brought up the rear and closed gates, had been rewarded with a nice view of a Townsend's warbler.

At noon we left Lost Valley and journeyed to Mr. Tourtillott's home, "Coon Hollow" on Metcalf Road. Here we picnicked under his oaks, drank his delicious coffee, and continued to add birds to our list: Nuttall's woodpecker, robin, varied thrush, Lawrence's goldfinch, white-crowned sparrow. Our final count was 58 species, and they made an interesting mixture of winter visitant birds still with us, early arriving summer residents, and the many birds which are with us, fortunately, all year round.

In mid-afternoon the wild-flower enthusiasts drove over to the Silver Creek Hills to look for the flower display which had been tentatively promised in the field trip announcement. We climbed the rocky slope in back of the Hassler ranch house—there were horned larks on the slope and a rock wren!—and found carpets of flowers just coming into bloom. There were masses of gold-fields, Johnny-tucks, and a lavender-flowered gilia which Miss Emily identified as Linanthus ambiguus. Scattered about were blue-dicks, cream-cups, shooting-stars, a wild onion with deep-pink flowers (Allium serratum), and the onion-like muilla (Allium spelled backwards). Near the top of a hill were beds of a charming little flower which, lacking a common name, has to be called "gypsophila-like montia." And at the last we found large patches of the lovely evening-snow, just unfolding its satiny white petals.

Grace Brubaker.