

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

December, 1949

THE REGULAR DECEMBER MEETING will be held next Monday, December 12, at 7:45 p.m., in Room 210, Natural Science Building, San Jose State College. Mr. Edward D. Wood, of the Natural Science Department, Modesto Junior College, will be our speaker and will show his color motion picture "Wildlife of the Rockies." He will also show about 200 feet of film which he took on the field trip to the Los Banos Bird and Game Refuge in late October of this year. Mr. Wood and other members of the Modesto Wildlife Conservation Society joined our group at the Refuge that day, and the two societies enjoyed a joint trip. Guests will be welcome at the meeting.

THE 1949 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT will be taken the Monday after Christmas, December 26, in the San Jose area. Jim Peterson will plan and conduct the Count. Further notice of the Count will be mailed in two weeks.

NOVEMBER 12 FIELD TRIP REPORT. It was a beautiful day for bird watching—sunny, with no wind or fog—and the twenty-one bird observers who met at the Palo Alto Station at 8 o'clock, were soon on their way. The plan was to bird on the Stanford Campus during the morning, and in the afternoon to look for water birds in the Dumbarton Bridge area.

The first stop was near the Stanford Convalescent Home, where there are fine oaks, as well as elms and other introduced trees and some old fruit trees. The most conspicuous bird here was the raucous-voiced acorn woodpecker. Three or four were sunning themselves near the top of a dead elm, and others were carrying acorns to places beyond our view. But we soon discovered three other, quieter members of the woodpecker family. Several red-shafted flickers were feeding on the ground, and a downy woodpecker was seen four times in fruit trees, once pecking into a fig which still hung on the tree. The most thrilling of the four woodpeckers here was a red-breasted sapsucker which put on a nice performance in a walnut tree, right over our heads. The fruit trees had attracted several kinds of birds, and we had good views of robins, western bluebirds, cedar waxwings, Audubon's warblers, and house finches. Just before we left the grounds of the Convalescent Home, several of us heard a peculiar chattering in a redwood. We were spellbound—what bird was that?—and then we discovered a tree squirrel, with his tail arched over his back, "swearing at us in his very best French." We found more tree squirrels (a variety of the fox squirrel which has been introduced into California) near the Mausoleum. Some one suggested that perhaps these fox squirrels are partly responsible for the fewer nesting birds on the Stanford Campus the last two or three years. The high spot of the morning was the visit to the Frost Memorial Amphitheatre. The vivid autumn colors of the liquidambar, "Cardinal" oaks, poplars, and ginkgos were beautiful against the rich green of pines and live oaks and other evergreens.

After time out for an early lunch (with our hospitable leaders, Nell and Les Sleeper, in the garden at their home—E. Smith), we drove out across the Dumbarton Bridge and parked our cars by the KGO Radio Station. The bay was calm and the water in the salt ponds so smooth it reflected the red radio towers and the brown Coyote Hills. No wind and an unusually warm day for November, made bird observing especially pleasant. The tide had been low before noon and was coming in under

the bridge, and most of the shore birds were loafing on the levees and in the shallow water of the ponds. A group of small sandpipers probing at the edge of the pond by the radio station afforded us excellent opportunity to compare the least, the western, and the red-backed sandpipers. Three northern phalaropes, swimming near the sandpipers, and twelve others in another pond, were more phalaropes than we expected to see in November. The shore birds which were present in largest numbers in the area between the radio station and the bridge, were willets and avocets. On one of the ponds a large company of eared grebes were swimming and diving. Among them were Bonaparte's gulls, feeding somewhat in the manner of phalaropes. Later we saw more of these graceful gulls among Forster's terns on the Palo Alto side of the bridge.

Just before we started home, in mid-afternoon, a marsh hawk put on a marvellous exhibition. He was a beautiful bird, in gray and white plumage. When we first saw him he seemed to be harrying a flock of small sandpipers, but he soon passed indifferently beyond them and flew up the slope of the Coyote Hills. After one apparently unsuccessful dive into the grass, he rose into the air and put on a brief tumbling act—swooped down a short way, turned over, and darted up again, to repeat the tumble two or three times. Then, with another "change of mind," he flew over the hill and out of sight.

List of birds for the trip. In the Stanford Campus area: sharp-shinned hawk, 1; Cooper's hawk, 1; sparrow hawk, 2; Calif. quail, call notes; Anna's hummingbird, 2; red-shafted flicker, 8; acorn woodpecker, 12; red-breasted sapsucker, 1; downy woodpecker, 1; black phoebe, 3; Calif. jay, 7; chestnut-backed chickadee, 15; plain titmouse, 6; bush-tit, 40±; robin, 14; western bluebird, 12; ruby-crowned kinglet, 2; Am. pipit, 6; cedar waxwing, 24; Hutton's vireo, 1; Audubon's warbler, 10; western meadowlark, 4; Brewer's blackbird, 14; purple finch, 4; house finch, 22; pine siskin, 2; Ark. goldfinch, 5; spotted towhee, 1; brown towhee, 8; white-crowned sparrow, 25+; song sparrow, 1.
Salt ponds, chiefly east of the Dumbarton Bridge: eared grebe, 500±; western grebe, 3; double-crested cormorant, 1; great blue heron, 1; Am. egret, 8; snowy egret, 1; scaup duck, 15; white-winged scoter, 16; marsh hawk, 3; sparrow hawk, 1; Am. coot, 1; long-billed curlew, 4; willet, 500±; least sandpiper, 200+; red-backed sandpiper, 300+; western sandpiper, 100+; marbled godwit, 8; avocet, 500±; northern phalarope, 15; Herring's gull, 1 (and other gulls unidentified); Bonaparte's gull, 30+; Forster's tern, 9; Am. pipit, 50+; Brewer's blackbird, 8; Savannah sparrow, 20+; song sparrow, 2.

Neil and Les Sleeper

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Branch of National Audubon Society

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Monthly meetings second Monday, alternately in San Jose and Palo Alto

Joint membership (Local and National), \$5.00 per year
Local membership, \$1.50 per year