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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

December, 1949

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THE DECEMBER FIELD TRIP will be a Christmas Bird Count. A bird count at Christmas time is traditional with many Audubon Societies and other groups of bird watchers. It was fifty years ago that Dr. Frank Chapman, founder and editor of Bird-Lore (now Audubon Magazine), inaugurated the annual "Christmas Bird Census," and published the reports sent in by the participants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now collaborating with the National Audubon Society in editing and summarizing the reports. Aside from their scientific value, bird counts are lots of fun—a sort of game to see how many different species of birds and how many individuals of each species can be recorded in one day in a given area. Choosing an area which includes as many types of bird habitats as possible, is part of the game. According to the rules of the count, prescribed by the National Audubon Society, "the area must fall within a circle fifteen miles in diameter," and the day for counting birds in that area must come between Christmas and New Year's.

The December field trip, our nineteenth Christmas Bird Count, will be taken the Monday after Christmas, December 26, in an area which will include the Alum Rock Park region, the salt marshes in the vicinity of Alviso, the foothills east of Milpitas, and the Evergreen district. The meeting place will be in San Jose, at the corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets, at 8 a.m. Jim Peterson, who will conduct the count, will explain the rules of the count at the meeting place and will outline the procedure to be followed. He urges all members to participate in the count. Bring lunch. Jim Peterson's phone is AXminster 6-0751. After the bird count trip, Sally and Ralph Smith have invited the participants to come to their home, 1284 Randol Ave., at 4:30 o'clock, to summarize the count. Members who are unable to attend the field trip are invited to join the party for the summary.

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY:

- Jan. 9, Monday, meeting in Palo Alto
- Jan. 12, Thursday, Screen Tour in San Jose, matinee and evening,
"Sounds of the Sageland," Alice and Harold Allen
- Jan. 14, Saturday, Screen Tour in Palo Alto, matinee, "Fun with Birds,"
Laura Reynolds (Sponsored by Palo Alto Garden Club.)
- Jan. 15, Sunday, field trip to Mt. Hermon and to the "Butterfly Trees"
in Santa Cruz, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zwaal
- Jan. 28, Saturday, field trip to Golden Gate Park, in San Francisco,
Mr. and Mrs. Irving Snow
- Feb. 9, Thursday, Screen Tour in San Jose, matinee and evening,
"Paul Bunyon Country," Walter J. Breckenridge
- Feb. 11, Saturday, Screen Tour in Palo Alto, matinee, "Paul Bunyon
Country," Walter J. Breckenridge (Palo Alto Garden Club)
- Feb. 13, Monday, meeting in San Jose
- Feb. 18 and 19, week-end field trip to Tomales Bay and Point Reyes,
Mr. and Mrs. George Nielsen

November Field Trip: - On Sunday, November the 27th, about 22 members gathered at the San Jose College "meetin' ground" for a trip to the Grant Ranch in Long Valley, and the Smith Creek Ranger Station. Both are located east of San Jose in the Mt. Hamilton Mountain area. This trip was more or less an experiment in-so-far as our Society had never taken it before.

Fog hung low over San Jose, but as we began the ascent into the foothills this gave way to clouds and sunshine in a brilliant sky.

The first stop was made approximately three miles up the mountain, where the thrill for this spot was the unannounced "explosion" of some 100 crows from a prominent out-cropping above the road. Through cloud-drift the sloping hills formed pretty patterns of light and shadow like an advancing tide, shaping and reshaping, shattered and unquiet, in a freshening wind, spreading below our feet a panorama of wild beauty. We heard the calls of the pipit and horned lark; wren-tit and golden-crowned. From the brow of the hill the killy-killy call of a pair of sparrow hawks.

Further along the route a lone valley quail scurried across the highway, white-crowns sought shelter in roadside brambles, and telephone lines were festooned with rows of house and green-backed goldfinches...There were few meadow larks; but those we saw were in beautiful plumage and some in fine song. Near the entrance to Long Valley we caught sight of fifteen band-tailed pigeons. This species was seen again over Smith Creek Ranger Station.

Mr. McNeil was our unofficial host in Long Valley as the lake we visited in that area lies on his property. He very graciously let us in and told us to stay as long as we wished...which we did in spite of a sharp wind. This area is unusually interesting in view of the fact that the lake invites shore and water birds; the brushy and oak-covered hillsides are hosts to jays, crows, flickers, magpies, and the like; the reedy borders of the lake invite marsh wrens, savannah sparrows, herons; the high-rolling hills, with their constant air currents, are attractive to the soaring birds: golden eagle, red-tail and other raptors.

Red-winged and Brewer blackbirds flew from the plowed ground in clouds. Usually, each species stayed well to themselves, but on one occasion they mingled together in a great blast displaying a strikingly beautiful contrast of brilliant red against shiny, irradiant black, intermingled among this contrast were the heavy forms of the crows. Magpies, approximately 50, stayed close to group of trees that bordered the western shore of the lake.

The majority of birds on the lake were coots. Sprinkled among them were pintails, scaup, canvas-back, red-head, mallards, and one Canada goose. The aerial thrill at this stop was the presence of 4 golden eagles and a pair of red-tailed hawks. As usual the red-tail had to make a couple of diving sorties at an eagle who paid not the slightest attention to such insignificant harassing.

It was around noon when we reluctantly pulled ourselves away from this delightful valley and drove on to the Smith Creek Ranger Station. It is well named as it is a long valley surrounded by rolling mountains. A curving road, bordered by tall poplars and a rustic, moss-covered fence, crosses its floor.

Arriving at Smith Creek we got down to the business at hand, eating, and this plebian, but necessary duty over we started snooping and our nosyness paid good dividends. The high spots in this area was the presence of the black-throated grey and Townsend warbler and a house wren who sat so quietly on a low, stumpy branch we could practically touch him. Other interesting observations was the stalking habit of the sharp-shinned hawk and the bullet like ascent of a golden eagle. Along the creek in alders and oak the little voices of the creeper, slender-billed nuthatch, chickadee and golden-crowned kinglet mingled with the more staccato and grating calls of the Hutton vireo, and ruby-crowned kinglet. A flock of band-tailed pigeons and cedar waxings flew over head, while from the hillside the peter-peter calls of the titmouse,

and the plaintive notes of the western bluebird contrasted with the clap-clap of the Flicker, yucca-yucca of the California woodpecker, and the raucous call of a Stellar's jay.

Day was beginning to fall as we gathered around the picnic tables to vote the day a success and to count our list, which is as follows: -

Eared Grebe	20	Wilson's snipe (dead)	1
Pied "	1	Band-tailed pigeon	30
Great Blue Heron	3	Mourning dove	12
American egret	1	Belted kingfisher	1
Canada Goose (subsq. ?)	1	Red-shafted flicker	5
Mallard	3	Cal. woodpecker	10
Baldpate	3	Nuttall's woodpecker	1
Cadwall	2	Black pheobe	3
American pintail	2	Say's pheobe	1
Ring-necked	20	Horned lark	6
Canvas-back	15	Stellar's jay	1
Scaup	12	Cal. jay	3
Ruddy duck	100	Yellow-billed magpie	35
Turkey vulture	1	Crow	500
Sharp-shinned hawk	3	Slender-billed nuthatch	2
Red-tailed	5	Wren-tit	1
Golden eagle	4	Brown creeper	2
Sparrow hawk	5	House wren	1
Cal. quail	2	Bewick's wren	1
Coot	500	Mockingbird	1
Kildeer	20	Robin	4
Western bluebird	20	Golden-crowned kinglet	1
Ruby-crowned kinglet	2	American pipit	50
Cedar waxwing	15	California shrike	3
Hutton's vireo	2	Audubon's warbler	3
Black-throated gray warbler	2	Townsend's warbler	12
Western meadowlark	12	Redwing blackbird	500
Brewer's blackbird	500	California purple finch	2
House finch	60	Willow goldfinch	2
Green-backed	50	Spotted towhee	1
Brown towhee	12	Savannah sparrow	14
Lark sparrow	24	Oregon junco	100
White-cr. sparrow	100	Golden-cr. sparrow	50
Song sparrow	3		

71 species

George and Beatrice Nielsen
leaders.