

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

March, 1950

THE FIRST OF THE TWO FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH will be taken next Saturday, March 11, to Jasper Ridge and Searsville Lake, with Mr. Curt Dietz as leader. Jasper Ridge, which is Stanford University property, has been posted for some time as a State Game Refuge by the California Division of Fish and Game. But recently the Division decided to abandon the refuge, in spite of vigorous protests from Stanford University and local conservation-minded organizations, including our Audubon Society. This field trip will give us an opportunity to see this area which Stanford has tried to preserve in its natural state, for biology students and amateur naturalists alike. The meeting place for the trip will be the Palo Alto S. P. Station, at 8 p.m. Bring lunch. San Jose members who can offer transportation meet at corner of E. San Carlos and Fifth Streets at 7:15.

A detailed notice of the March 26th field trip to the New Almaden country will be mailed in about two weeks.

THE REGULAR MARCH MEETING will be held in Palo Alto the following Monday, March 13, at the Palo Alto High School. The meeting is set for 7:45 p.m. in Room 2. The first fifteen minutes of the program will be devoted to reports of bird observations by members of the Society. (Have you found a bush-tit's nest, or seen a titmouse or a song sparrow carrying nesting material? Have you seen an Allen's hummingbird or swallows or other early spring migrants from the south?) Our speaker for the evening will be Mr. John Janssen, of the California Bureau of Marine Fisheries, who will show his color slides of the interesting fisheries industry in Japan. While in Japan with the U.S. army Mr. Janssen was especially interested in observing what the Japanese people are doing to foster their very important fishery resources.

OUR FOURTH SCREEN TOUR comes Friday, March 17. Please note the day and the date. The date announced in our folders and on our tickets was correct, but the day of the week was wrong. Please help clear up the confusion which has resulted, by passing on this correction to those you know are attending the series or are in any way interested.

The Screen Tour will be held at the Montgomery Theatre, San Jose Civic Auditorium. There will be a matinee at four o'clock, and the evening performance will be at eight. Mr. Howard Cleaves will show his remarkable "Midnight Movies in Animaland." Many successful pictures have been taken of animals at night—nocturnal animals are little disturbed by artificial light—but they all have been still pictures. It remained for Howard Cleaves, a veteran wildlife photographer, to solve the problem of taking motion pictures which could show night happenings in the wilderness. Mr. Cleaves uses a powerful portable gasoline generator which can deliver enough electricity to turn night into day for fifty yards or more. With clever devices for mounting his strong lights on the tripod with his camera, on the bow of a boat, and even on his shoulders, Mr. Cleaves has prowled at night in many places, from the Everglades swamps of Florida to the Cascade Mountains in Washington and from the spruce forests of Maine to the deserts of Arizona and California.

The write-ups about this Screen Tour not only promise remarkable pictures, but represent Mr. Cleaves as an unusually good speaker, who is popular with audiences everywhere. "Midnight Movies in Animaland" will interest school children too. Matinee tickets for school children (for the matinee only) are 25 cents, and can be obtained at the door. For both matinee and evening performances the general admission tickets are 74 cents and the student tickets 50 cents.

The Palo Alto Garden Club will present the same Screen Tour Saturday afternoon, March 18, in the Palo Alto High School Auditorium, at 2 p.m.

NEW MEMBERS DURING FEBRUARY. Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes as new members: Mr. John Bloom, Los Gatos; Mrs. Alice Crabtree, San Jose; Mrs. Helen A. de S. Canavarro, Morgan Hill; Mrs. Bertram F. Jakobsen, Menlo Park; and Mrs. Donald Lilly, San Carlos. Here are two corrections, with apologies, for mistakes in the January list of new members: Mrs. Elma H. Levorsen and Mrs. R. Wesley Wright, Atherton; and Mr. U. E. Laurence, Redwood City.

Our Society now has a paid-up membership of about one hundred, half of whom are joint members of both the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society. Seventeen of the joint members are transfers. As National Audubon Society members living in our area, they elected to transfer part of their membership to our Society when it became a Branch of the National Society. Most of these transfers joined us "sight unseen." To these new members we extend a special welcome. Your presence and interest at our meetings and on our field trips will help our Society in its efforts to become an effective Branch of the National Audubon Society.

Applications for membership should go to Mrs. Irving W. Snow, Route 2, Box 460, Los Gatos. Mrs. Snow's telephone number is Los Gatos 17J4X.

SOME SEASONAL OBSERVATIONS. At last the cedar waxwings are in my neighborhood in large numbers and are cleaning up a lot of berries; but there are still not enough robins to be any help. The song sparrow which has been singing in my garden this winter is definitely nesting. On March 3 the female was busily picking up awkward lengths of nesting material and dragging them to the top of the holly-leaf cherry hedge. The same day a titmouse was seen picking up white woolly hairs which our Samoyed dog had shed; and a California jay was gathering bits of fine grass for its nest in the Leptospermum hedge. Mrs. Etta Smith reported a pair of bush-tits nest-building in an olive tree in her garden before the middle of February, and Dr. Matt Vessel says he knows of two nearly finished bush-tit nests between his home and the College. My first spring migrant was a male Allen's hummingbird, February 1. Before the end of the month I saw a female pulling at cobwebs and using the torn bits to firm her tiny nest in a sycamore, next to a blossoming blue gum. An orange-crowned warbler was singing February 28 near the creek, and since then the song has been heard several times. March 3 twenty or more tree swallows were flying low over the Guadalupe Creek and the adjoining fields along Coleman Road, and with them two or three violet-green swallows. Emily Smith

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JANUARY 28 FIELD TRIP REPORT. In spite of the very wet weather the day before, ten members and three guests assembled at the meeting place on the Marina at the appointed time.

First, we drove out along the sea-wall of the St. Francis Yacht Harbor where we found western grebes, several double-crested cormorants, coots, and western gulls. Also a small flock of Brewer's blackbirds was feeding on the grass by the side of the road. But the most interesting observation was that of a surf-bird sitting on some piling below the wall. It allowed us to come quite close. Indeed it was some time before we could induce it to fly and reveal the white base of its tail and the white line in its wings.

We next went to the Fine Arts Lagoon to study the wild ducks, who have learned to trust their human visitors and swim close, hoping for food. Baldpate and mallard ducks were everywhere on the little lake. There were about twenty-five ring-necked ducks, and a comparable number of canvas-back ducks. Shoveler ducks, although fewer in numbers, were conspicuous because of the gorgeous coloring of the males and because of the peculiar manner of feeding of this species. We watched them swimming in a great circle, the sexes alternating, their heads down in the water so that the food stirred up by the duck ahead was strained through the great bill of the duck behind. The beautiful purple heads of the lesser scaups were everywhere in evidence. The perky little ruddy ducks swam about, their spikey tails held high. Most of them still had their winter plumage, but a few were becoming ruddy ducks in reality.

Many gulls, short-billed, western, California, and glaucous-winged darted hither and yon, trying to snatch the bread which we were throwing to the ducks. The mute swan came up for their share, too. Our only disappointment came when no amount of bread tossing would entice the wood ducks from their island.

Finally we left for Golden Gate Park. As we were riding along the Marina we saw one brown pelican. We ate our lunches at the northermost of the chain of lakes and watched the mallard ducks, coots and mute swans, as well as several land birds as we did so. The shrubbery near us held many song sparrows, house sparrows, and white-crowned sparrows. A black phoebe perched in the willows and flew in and out, uttering his sharp little call note. The high point was reached, however, when Fanny Zwaal, who had been exploring along the water's edge, came back and announced that two beautiful ducks were swimming close in, a little further down the lake. We hurried to the spot and there, in all their splendor, were two male wood ducks. They were very tame and we had a fine chance to observe them.

After lunch we explored the lakes further. We saw a few house finches, a few robins, a small flock of Audubon's warblers, a flock of about one hundred pine siskins, several Anna's humming birds towering, and many white-crowned sparrows. We heard a spotted towhee, chestnut-backed chickadees, a ruby-crowned kinglet, and a yellow-throat. At the middle lake we flushed an Anthony's green heron. On the way back to the cars some of the group saw a Hutton's vireo.

Our last destination was Lake Merced, where we made three stops. We found a number of eared grebes, a pied-billed grebe, a double-crested cormorant, and a sharp-shinned hawk in the willows. At the last stop we came upon a very large flock of Audubon's warblers.

It was time to start on the homeward journey. There had not been one drop of rain.

Lina Snow