

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

August 1950

THE AUGUST FIELD TRIP will be taken next Sunday, August 27, in the Palo Alto area, and will have two objectives. The party will go first to the Searsville Lake region to see what summer-visiting birds have not yet started on their way south for the winter; and then to various mud flats and salt ponds around the south end of San Francisco Bay to look for migrating shore birds, which have been returning from the far north ever since the middle of July. Les and Nell Sleeper will be leaders. Meet at the S. P. Station in Palo Alto. Bring lunch.

at 7:30  
The filed trip of Sunday, April 23, developed into one of the more rigorous hikes. There were forty-two on whom Elsie Hoeck pinned name tags. The tags had been secured by the leader, Wil Luick, from the San Jose Chamber of Commerce.

The day was bright and clear. En route to the first stop at the Smith Creek Ranger Station many birds were seen and heard, but a listing of them as well as of those noted by some of the members in the afternoon at the Smith Creek area have been omitted from this report.

The Melvin Johnson ranch was reached via the Kincaid Road, off the Mount Hamilton Road. Eleanor and Melvin Johnson have no ranch buildings in use on the property, and there are no stock being pastured. One would describe the territory as a natural wild-life refuge.

Our destination was the crest overlooking Arroyo Hondo. Near the top was a basin where the melted snow collects and forms a miniature lake. As we made our way upward we were treated to one of the finest wildflower shows of the season. Particularly outstanding were the Gold Fields. The Shooting Stars were long-stemmed and rich in color. Bird's eye Gilia, Mule's Ears, Hound's Tongue, Mission Bells, and False Lupine were observed.

A number of persons carried Coulter or Digger Pine cones away with them. Several have commented upon the excellent opportunity afforded to study the two pine species.

After most of the party reached the crest and had rested, Eleanor Johnson led some of the group back to the cars the way we had come, while Melvin Johnson took another group back by another route. We are most indebted to the Johnsons for their gracious hospitality.

Birds seen: Turkey Vulture -3; Sharp-shinned Hawk -1; Cooper's Hawk -1; Red-tailed Hawk -2; California Quail -5; Mourning Dove -3; Rufous Hummingbird -1; Red-shafted Flicker -1; California Woodpecker -3; Ash-throated Flycatcher -4; Black Phoebe -3, several nests, one of which had two eggs; Olive-sided Flycatcher -1; Violet-green Swallow -5; Steller's Jay -6; California Jay -6, one nest with one egg, one nest with two eggs; Chestnut-backed Chickadee -4; Plain Titmouse -10; Bush-tit -4; White-breasted Nuthatch -1; Wren-tit -3; Bowick's Wren -2; Hutton's Vireo -2; Cassin's Vireo -4; Warbling Vireo -4; Orange-crowned Warbler -8; Audubon's Warbler -1; Black-throated Gray Warbler -2; Yellow-throat -1; Black-headed Grosbeak -3; Purple Finch -1; Spotted Towhee -2; Brown Towhee -3; Oregon Junco -3; Golden crowned Sparrow -1, singing.

Perhaps it should be reported that several Lazuli Buntings were observed along the road on the way to the Smith Creek Ranger Station.

Wilbur F. Luick.

AUDUBON FIELD TRIP July 8, 1950

This trip was a rather wide ranging one embracing the area from Steven's Creek to the mouth of the Waddell Creek on the Pacific Coast some 19 miles north of Santa Cruz. Stands to look, listen, and count were made in the two bridges area below Steven's Dam, on Steven's Dam, at Steven's Creek Resort, the Boylan home at Mt. Hermon, Santa Cruz Big Trees, the rock islet off West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, a point on West Cliff Drive near San Jose Street, the beach at Waddell Creek, and the mansion of Mr. Hoover on Rancho del Oso.

Agnes Frusman brought large red placards with the Audubon name in white letters prepared by herself and Ann Peterson, and Clyde remembered the Scotch tape so our caravan set out with appropriate labels posted in the rear windows.

Due to the lateness of the season birds in the wooded area of the two bridges below Steven's Dam were quiet and furtive but Beatrice Nielsen was persistent in ferreting us out a nice list at this stand.

Steven's Dam was very productive, yielding Vaux Swifts, many Ash-throated Flycatchers, a gnatcatcher, myriads of young quail who set the air aquiver with alarm notes along the spillway, and many other birds.

The Tyrannidae were prominent through-out the day. The Western Flycatcher seemed to be calling everywhere and five species of the family were counted.

Mr. and Mrs. Boylan received our group very graciously and, as usual, had a number of interesting things for us to see at their Mt. Hermon home.

Lunch stop was at the Santa Cruz Big Trees Park. For the benefit of some Stanford students who had not visited the grove we made the prepared circuit of the redwoods. Jo Oderkirk noted a tiny wren creeping on the ground as we stood on a cluvert looking off through the trees. There were actually a pair of winter wrens collecting food for a nest of young secreted in a deep recess in a log by the trail reached by an unobtrusive opening near the circumference of the butt. We witnessed a few trips of the parents to the nest and peaked once quietly into the hole, but left soon as we did not wish to call attention of the holiday crowd on the path to our discovery.

Opposite the islet off West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, where the cormorants always congregate, the waves have bit deep into the vertical cliffs to form a tiny beach of white sand cluttered with debris from the falling walls. Here we paused to study the birds on the islet. At once someone discovered a Brown Pelican awash in the surf, trying feebly to creep further up onto the beach each time the ebb dropped it onto the sand. Then a California Murre came swimming in from the deep water heading directly to the bit of beach. Its short flipper-like wings beat the air occasionally and often it dived seemingly under perfect control. Once on the beach it quickly climbed up to a sheltered spot among the boulders. From the cliff above we could see no oil on the Murre's feathers. Perhaps it had only temporarily lost power of flight because of moulting.

Two of the Stanford lads were able to work part of the way down to the beach, but stopped due to our urging, at the exposed stretch of shelf over which rollers from the Pacific crashed at frequent intervals. Someone found a bit of rope in their car, but it broke under a single tug, obviously poor equipment for cliff scaling. So we drove away hoping that the sunshine and rest would mend the Murre. The pelican, already inert, was floating away from the beach drawn by a bit of undertow.

Further along on West Cliff Drive we parked among fish nets spread out along the road for mending and then moved to where we could observe nesting Pigeon Guillemots flashing to and from their ledges and burrows under the edge of the cliff bordering

our parking area. Just under our feet a swarm of Cliff and Bank Swallows swooped in and out of their nests in a sandy bank.

The stop at the mouth of Scott's Creek on Calif. 1 was really just a sufficient slackening of the speed of the caravan so that everyone could note the five or six broods of Coot "chick" swimming on the lagoon.

Mr. Hoover and Robert McLean, his grandson, were awaiting us near the gate to the Rancho del Oso. Robert, who is a Junior Audubon member, had prepared a list of nests and birds for us to see and immediately led us on a trek down to the ocean beach to inspect the nest of a thrush, to search fruitlessly for the nest of a Snowy Plover on the white sand, and to find three eggs of a Killdeer on a bar of fine gravel.

Pine Siskins were feeding on the thistles growing along the road to the Hoover mansion. At the mansion Robert and Mrs. McLean showed us the mud-plastered nest of a Barn Swallow on the wall of the front porch anchored up close to the ceiling. Then we watched another McLean boy chopping the paws off a badger which had been killed by a car on the highway. These were to be used to make plaster casts of badger tracks.

Humming birds, both Anna's and Allen's, were buzzing around the flower beds of the front lawn like insects.

Rancho del Oso has been proposed as a wildlife and nature refuge to the National Audubon Society. It certainly seems to be an ideal area for the purpose. Some three thousand acres lying along the valley of Waddell Creek are included in El Rancho. A good portion of the headwaters of the valley lie in the protected area of Big Basin. Both above and below the fork of Waddell Creek the floor and slope of the valley are thickly timbered with redwoods, Douglas fir and associated growth. Selective logging of mature timber is proceeding in this zone in conformity with the best conservation thinking. The broad lower valley is bounded by rather arid-appearing slopes sparsely covered with trees. It is a zone of grain fields, of thickets, of creeks, and lagoons. From Rancho del Oso, Waddell Creek flows thinly over clean sand to the ocean. The valley has everything for a nature reserve. Probably the grizzlies, one of whom caused the death of Waddell as he was cutting timber in the 1860's, are the only primitive features now vanished from the region.

We were pleased to have Dr. Walter C. Brown and his class in ornithology from Stanford as guests.

Mary McCormick made her first field trip as a member of our Society. During the lunch period she drove back to Santa Clara, 918 Sunset Drive, for Mr. and Mrs. George R. Bottini.

The people:

Roberta Wright  
Mary McCormick  
Bill and Jo Oderkirk  
Bea Nielsen  
Juliette Jones  
Clyde and Agnes Prusman

Darrel Pierce  
Chas. Stephens, Jr.  
Robert H. Reinhart  
Robert C. Allen  
Mr. and Mrs. George R. Bottini  
Oleta and Neil Dickenson

The birds observed:

Farallon Cormorant	Nuttall's Woodpecker	Cassin's Vireo
Brandt's Cormorant	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo
Baird's Cormorant	Black Phoebe	Yellow Warbler
Surf Scoter	Western Flycatcher	Yellow-throat
Turkey Vulture	Western Wood Pewee	Pileolated Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Western Meadowlark
Red-tailed Hawk	Violet-green Swallow	Red-wing
Marsh Hawk	Bank Swallow	Bullock's Oriole
Calif. Quail	Barn Swallow	Brewer's Blackbird
Virginia Rail	Cliff Swallow	Black-headed Grosbeak
Coot	Steller's Jay	Lazuli Bunting
Snowy Plover	Calif. Jay	Calif. Purple Finch
Killdeer	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	House Finch
Western Sandpiper	Bush-tit	Pine Siskin
Western Gull	Slender-billed Nuthatch	Willow Goldfinch
Calif. Gull	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Green-backed Goldfinch
Heermann's Gull	Pygmy Nuthatch	Spotted Towhee
Mourning Dove	Wren-tit	Brown Towhee
Vaux's Swift	Brown Creeper	Oregon Junco
Anna's Hummingbird	Winter Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Allen's Hummingbird	Calif. Thrasher	Song Sparrow
Belted Kingfisher	Robin	Calif. Murre
Red-shafted Flicker	Russet-backed Thrush	Pigeon Guillemot
Calif. Woodpecker	Western Bluebird	Brown Pelican
Downy Woodpecker	Western Gnatcatcher	Pied-billed Grebe
		Hermit Thrush

Oleta and Neil Dickinson

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