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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

February 1951

A FIELD TRIP to Alum Rock Park will be taken next Sunday, February 25, with Jim Peterson as leader. Mr. Peterson knows the park well, for he was stationed there for several years as Naturalist. The meeting place for the trip will be in East San Jose, at the corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Miguelito Ave., just north of the main entrance to San Jose Country club. Meet at 8 a.m. and bring along a lunch. For information about possible transportation, telephone Mrs. Lester Brubaker in San Jose; Miss Emily Smith in Los Gatos; or C. L. Sleeper in Menlo Park.

(The next two field trip dates: Mar. 17, along Adobe Creek, in Los Altos area; and Apr. 1, to Coyote Reservoir, south and <sup>east</sup> west from Morgan Hill)

THE FOURTH AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR comes Friday, March 2. Allan Cruickshank, who will present "Below the Big Bend," is no stranger to us. Twice our Society has had occasion to know he is a lively, skillful lecturer and an ace bird photographer. This year he takes his audience into one of our newest primeval national parks, Big Bend National Park in southwest Texas where the Rio Grande makes a "big bend." In this wilderness area of desert country, deep river gorges, and towering castellated mountains, Mr. Cruickshank will show us springtime carpets of desert flowers; such interesting birds as the Vermilion Flycatcher and the wild turkey; and among other unusual animals, the strange Armadillo. Also included in this motion picture film are shots Mr. Cruickshank took on side trips to "a cave of two million bats"; to the colorful border town of Villa Acuna; and to the Laguna Madre country at the Gulf of Mexico.

The Screen Tour will be held in the Montgomery Theatre, San Jose Civic Auditorium, at eight o'clock (Friday, March 2). Tickets are 74 cents (students 50 cents) and can be had at the door the evening of the performance. In the afternoon Mr. Cruickshank will show a shortened version of this film to school children in the Los Gatos Grammar School.

THE REGULAR MARCH MEETING will be held in Palo Alto on Monday, March 5, instead of on the usual second Monday of the month. The meeting place will be the Junior Museum, at the Community Center on Middlefield Road, and the time, 8 o'clock. A postcard next week will announce the program.

THE ORNITHOLOGY LECTURES by Dr. Charles G. Sibley, which our Society is sponsoring, are being well attended and enthusiastically received. The third lecture, "Bird Behavior," will be given in San Jose on Wednesday, March 7, at 8 p.m. in Room 210 of the Science Building, San Jose State College; and the same lecture will be repeated in Redwood City on the following Monday, March 12, at the same hour, in Room 26, Music Building, Secucioa High School. Attendance at the lectures is not limited to those with season tickets. Single admission at any one lecture is 75 cents.

STRAYED, a book loaned to the Society by Curt Dietz, "Birds Over America" by Roger Tory Peterson. Does any one know where it is? Please let Grace Brubaker or the Corresponding Secretary know.

JANUARY 13 FIELD TRIP REPORT. The day was mild and sunny, after early morning frost, with only occasional wind to bother us. The areas visited were the Amphitheatre and Lagunita on the Stanford Campus; Searsville Lake; and the marshes at the beginning of the west approach to Dumbarton Bridge. The best birding was at Lagunita and Searsville Lake.

Lagunita, after the abundant early rains, had become quite a pond, and there was a nice display of ducks there. Two or three dozen Canvas-backs were easy to identify; and near enough to them to make comparison easy, were three Redheads. Close to the shore were about thirty Mallards, and off by themselves, half a dozen Ring-necked Ducks; and further out, at least fifty Ruddy Ducks, about twenty Scaups, and two pairs of Buffleheads. Other than ducks, there were many Coots and, swimming by themselves, four Pied-billed Grebes. Where we were standing by the road on the south side of Lagunita, there was a Black Phoebe, a Sparrow Hawk, and, disturbed by our presence, a pair of Loggerhead Shrikes.

At Searsville Lake the water birds were few. A flock of perhaps forty Ring-necked Ducks flushed suddenly and with swish of wing beat flew overhead and out of sight. Later a group of sixteen Mallards also flushed. For the rest, there were two pairs of Shovellers, two or three Ruddy Ducks, two Pied-billed Grebes, and some Coots. Land birds, however, were plentiful on the west side of the lake. The outstanding discovery was an immature White-throated Sparrow, feeding under oaks near the gate, in company with Golden-crowned Sparrows. The distinctive throat patch was not pure white, but it was clearly defined, and the yellow spot in front of the eye was obvious when the sun shone on it.

At the invitation of Capt. and Mrs. Ransom Davis we spent a very enjoyable noon hour in the patio of their Menlo Park home, where they had hot coffee for us and some extras for our picnic lunches.

Birds listed at Searsville Lake (which Miss Emily Smith insists should be included in this report): Pied-billed Grebe, 2; Great Blue Heron, 1; Mallard, 16; Shoveller, 2 pairs; Ring-necked Duck, 40; Ruddy Duck, 2 or 3; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1 (caught junco and took it to pine top to eat); Red-tailed Hawk, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 1; Coot, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ ; Killdeer, 2 together; Anna's Hummingbird, 4; Red-shafted Flicker, 5; Acorn Woodpecker, 6; Red-breasted Sapsucker, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Black Phoebe, 3; Cal. Jay, 5; Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 10; Plain Titmouse, 6; Bush-tit, flock; White-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Wren-tit, 2; Creeper, 2; Bewick's Wren, 1; Robin, 8; Varied Thrush, 14; W. Bluebird, 8; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 3; Cedar Waxwing, small flock; Audubon's Warbler, 5; W. Meadowlark, 4; Red-winged Blackbird, large flock; Purple Finch, 8; House Finch, 12; Am. Goldfinch, 3; Green-backed Goldfinch, 3; Spotted Towhee, 2; Brown Towhee, 5; Ore. Junco, large flock; White-crowned Sparrow, large flock; Golden-crowned Sparrow, 24; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 3. (Driving back from Searsville Lake, along the Sandhill Road, two Lewis's Woodpeckers were spotted in an oak.)

Neil Dickinson

JANUARY 28 FIELD TRIP REPORT. Almost two months after the original trip to Lake Merritt was cancelled, seven "die-hards" journeyed up to Oakland. The day was overcast and cool, but not too unpleasant. Those of us who had been on the Christmas Bird Count were all braced to count birds by the thousands. Imagine our chagrin when we got to the lake and saw only half a dozen birds swimming around. Close scrutiny showed three of them to be grebes, one Pied-billed and two Western. The fourth bird was a

male American Golden-eye. The fifth and sixth birds got away.

Later we saw a female Golden-eye and had a close-up look at another male Golden-eye. We were awed by his beauty and at how he seemed to match, feather for feather, the color plate in Kortright's "Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America" which Elsie Hoeck had wisely brought along. In the absence of bird experts, that book was our only authority for what we were seeing. American Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, three female Wood Ducks—with their curious white eye rings—Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, and, of course, the ubiquitous Mallard, made up the roster of ducks we finally saw.

The Cackling, Lesser Canada, and Common Canada Geese lined up to be identified. The gulls were equally obliging. One hundred thirty Bonaparte's perched on several upturned boats until we could count them. The Ring-billed and Western Gulls we were also sure of. In the absence of an expert (Miss Hoeck's book didn't have any gull pictures in it) we could only think we saw two other species.

Many Coots were feeding on the lawn, and for some of us the sight of their odd, and yet somehow attractive green lobulated feet was new. It made us feel more kindly disposed toward the lowly "mud hen."

After a liesurely lunch we went over the check list and were surprised to find that we had seen, counting land birds in Lakeside Park as well as the water birds, forty-eight species of birds. After leaving Lake Merritt we did a great deal of exploring of the back roads out of Oakland, some of it unintentional, before we found one headed in our direction. We had a lot of fun and were only sorry that more members hadn't come along to enjoy our trip.

Grace Brubaker, Reporter  
and co-leader with Elsie Hoeck

SOME BIRD OBSERVATIONS. Sunday evening, February 11, Neil Dickinson telephoned that he had been on the Skyline Boulevard that day, driving to San Francisco, when, in his own words, "I looked down from the last point where one can see down to the shore of the Reservoir, and there, so help me, was our national emblem!" Neil saw the Bald Eagle at close range, a mature bird, "perched on a boulder at the water's edge," and also "flying near the shore with a dangling mass in its talons." A card from Curt Dietz, dated February 2, read: "Saw a Bald Eagle yesterday at Crystal Springs Lake." And now Dr. Sibley comes along and tells about seeing a Bald Eagle on January 16, at south end of Crystal Springs Lake.

Another rare bird for our area was reported by Mrs. Adist Boylan—seven Clark's Nutcrackers near Bonnie Doon in the Santa Cruz Mts., January 14. These hardy birds of the higher mountains are dependent upon pine seeds for food when snow covers the ground. A reported cone crop shortage in the Sierra Nevada this fall could be the reason for nutcrackers wandering as far away as the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Nine Evening Grosbeaks were seen by Mrs. Anne Peterson, February 18, in alder trees along the Guadalupe Cr., north of San Jose. Mrs. Fanny Zwaal who reported Evening Grosbeaks in late December, says they are still coming daily—two or three at a time—to her feed tray for sunflower seeds.

Spring migrant birds are already coming north. An Allen's Hummingbird, which probably wintered in Mexico, was feeding at Japanese Quince flowers in a garden near Los Gatos on February 6, along with an Anna's Hummingbird which, fortunately for us, does not migrate. Emily Smith

THE 1950 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT was planned and successfully conducted by Anne Peterson. The following report was compiled by Mrs. Peterson and sent to the National Audubon Society, to appear in the April issue of "Audubon Field Notes," along with Bird Counts from all over the country.

San Jose, Calif. (center of count area NE of city, corner of Capitol Av. and Mabury Rd.; marsh 18%, stream thicket 13%, pasture 15%, foothill canyon 22%, suburbs 42%, orchards 22%, waste fields 2%). Dec. 31, 1950; 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Clear; temperature 36 to 55 degrees; wind NW, 12 to 30 m.p.h./ Twenty-three observers in five parties. Total party hours 120 (18½ on foot, 101½ by car). Total party miles 119 (18½ on foot, 109 by car). Eared Grebe, 400(±50); Great Blue Heron, 3; Am. Egret, 10; Canada Goose, 1; Mallard, 11; Am. Pintail, 647; Green-winged Teal, 2; Cinnamon Teal, 3; Shoveller, 750(±100); Redhead, 2; Canvas-back, 16; Am. Golden-eye, 2; Buffle-head, 12; Ruddy Duck, 355(±50); Turkey Vulture, 6; White-tailed Kite, 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 5; Cooper's Hawk, 2; Red-tailed Hawk, 27; Ferruginous Hawk, 1; Golden Eagle, 5; Marsh Hawk, 6; Prairie Falcon, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 35; Calif. Quail, 36; Am. Coot, 1600(±200); Killdeer, 125; Black-bellied Plover, 48; Wilson's Snipe, 25; Long-billed Curlew, 1; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Willet, 3335(±1000); Greater Yellow-legs, 30; Least Sandpiper, 877(±50); Red-backed Sandpiper, 491(±25); Dowitcher, 29; W. Sandpiper, 536; Marbled Godwit, 13; Am. Avocet, 2300 (±200); Glaucous-winged Gull, 4; Herring Gull, 602; Ring-billed Gull, 635; Bonaparte's Gull, 101; Forster's Tern, 1; Mourning Dove, 1; Burrowing Owl, 1; White-throated Swift, 12; Anna's Hummingbird, 8; Red-shafted Flicker, 23; Acorn Woodpecker, 20; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; Nuttall's Woodpecker, 1; Black Phoebe, 8; Horned Lark, 130(±10); Steller's Jay, 22; Scrub Jay, 34; Yellow-billed Magpie, 9; Am. Crow, 177(±10); Chestnut-backed Chickadee, 34; Plain Titmouse, 13; Bushtit, 38; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 2; Wren-tit, 4; Winter Wren, 1; Bewick's Wren, 5; Canyon Wren, 1; Mockingbird, 34; Calif. Thrasher, 1; Am. Robin, 105; Varied Thrush, 10; Hermit Thrush, 13; W. Bluebird, 77; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 34; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 18; Water Pipit, 508; Cedar Waxwing, 14; Loggerhead Shrike, 13; Hutton's Vireo, 7; Orange-crowned Warbler, 3; Myrtle Warbler, 2; Audubon's Warbler, 141; Black-throated Gray Warbler, 1; Townsend's Warbler, 1; House Sparrow, 48; W. Meadowlark, 314(±50); Red-winged Blackbird, 6; Brewer's Blackbird, 750(±30); Purple Finch, 19; House Finch, 206; Pine Siskin, 20; Am. Goldfinch, 13; Lesser Goldfinch, 380; Spotted Towhee, 6; Brown Towhee, 35; Savannah Sparrow, 29; Lark Sparrow, 103; Rufous-crowned Sparrow, 2; Ore. Junco, 203; White-crowned Sparrow, 281; Golden-crowned Sparrow, 85; Fox Sparrow, 3; Song Sparrow, 33.

Total, 105 species; about 17,136 individuals. (Seen in area on Dec. 29 and 30: Evening Grosbeak, 1)

Anne Peterson, Compiler

Observers on the 1950 Bird Count: Miss Eva Allen, Mrs. Grace Brubaker, B. Neil Dickinson, Dr. William Graf, Miss Janet Koppel, Mr. and Mrs. George Nielsen, Mrs. Esther Ollis, Mrs. Anne Peterson, James Peterson, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Prusman, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Seibert, Mrs. Mary Ellen Shore, Dr. Charles Sibley, C. Lester Sleeper, Miss Emily Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Irving Snow, Mrs. Margaret Weiss, Albert Wool, Mrs. Fanny Zwaal.

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