

SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

June 1951

TWO COMING FIELD TRIPS: (1) Saturday, June 9, around Searsville Lake, with Les Sleeper. Les reports many bird songs in the willows, ducklings on the lake, and plenty of other good birding opportunities. Meet in Palo Alto at the S. P. Station at 8 a.m. Bring lunch.

(2) Saturday, June 23, Moss Landing, with Charles and Viola Anderson. The Andersons promise nesting Forster's Terns, Black-necked Stilts, Avocets, and others. Meet in Moss Landing, at parking area just north of bridge, at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch.

Les Sleeper, Field Trip Chairman.

ORNITHOLOGY LECTURES. Dr. Sibley's concluding lecture, "Geographic Variation: the Significance of Subspecies," deals with the perplexing problem of subspecies—and, incidentally, will clear up why in our field trip reports certain birds are now being listed under new names, the Lutescent Warbler, for instance, and the Slender-billed Nuthatch. The lecture will be given in Palo Alto on Monday, June 11, in the Junior Museum at 8 p.m. Attendance at the lecture is not limited to those who are taking the course. The single admission is 75 cents.

REGULAR JUNE MEETING will be held in Los Gatos on Monday, June 18, at the Legion Memorial Building, 123 East Main St. (across street from Town Hall) at 8 p.m. First ten minutes of the program will be devoted to reports of recent bird observations by members. Come prepared to participate in this important, always enjoyable part of the program. As speaker of the evening, Dr. Charles G. Sibley of San Jose State College, will tell of his experiences in Mexico on field trips to study birds of that country, and will illustrate his talk with color slides. After the program there will be a brief business session to elect officers and directors for the coming year.

An hour or so of birding and a 6 o'clock picnic supper will precede the meeting for those who can come early. Charles and Frances Sibley have invited the group to use a community picnic area near their home in the Los Gatos-Saratoga area (see enclosed map). Come as soon as you can after 4 o'clock, with field glasses and basket supper. There is a good fireplace to cook wienies or steaks and an oven to warm rolls. Bring a stick or two to help along the fire, if you happen to have some firewood, and a cup for coffee.

Agnes Prusman, Program Chairman.

REPORT OF PINNACLES NAT'L MONUMENT FIELD TRIP, April 14 and 15, 1951. It would take too much space to tell all we did on the Pinnacles trip. Thirty-four of us, counting the five children, camped in the Monument Saturday night, and Sunday morning four more members arrived. For many of us the chief interest in the trip lay in the possibility of finding the nest of a Duck Hawk, or Peregrine Falcon as it perhaps more properly should be called. Mr. Hoover, the ranger in charge, directed us to two former nesting sites. Saturday afternoon we walked up Chalone Peak Trail to one of the two sites, but found no trace of Peregrine Falcons. Nevertheless we thoroughly enjoyed our walk. One lovely

picture lingers in the memory. A pine tree, yellow with ripe pollen "catkins," stood out on a little point against a red cliff on the opposite side of the narrow canyon. Suddenly a sharp gust of wind shook the tree and a long shimmering banner of golden specks streamed out in the sunlight.

Sunday morning most of us set out for the Old Pinnacles and the other known nesting site. We walked about two miles of the old road, and along the way enjoyed the many birds and wild flowers, and the picturesque rock spires and crags which give the Monument its name. A short way beyond the Old Pinnacles camp ground we found the place from which there is a good view of the great escarpment where Peregrine Falcons have been known to nest. Clyde Prusman set up his 'scope and carefully explored the rocky wall in front of us, while the rest of us explored with our binoculars. Suddenly Clyde exclaimed, "There he is!" Sure enough, on a ledge about twenty feet down from the top, was the falcon. He remained quiet, observing us, no doubt, while we observed him. When a vulture sailed by he gave chase but was soon back at his perch. After a considerable interval of watchful waiting, he took off again and disappeared into a recess in the face of the cliff, not far below his perch. Did he have a mate and nest there? We waited and waited. Finally out he came and perched on the edge of the cave-like recess. We could see his distinctive black moustachios and, when he obligingly turned, the slaty blue of his back. And then, to our great joy, the female joined her mate at the entrance to the cave. After a skirmish which might have been courtship, the male flew away and the female returned to the hidden recesses of the cave. We surely wished that we could fly up and look in upon her, so that we could be absolutely sure that we had found the 1951 nest site of a pair of Peregrine Falcons.

Bird list for the two days: Turkey Vulture; Golden Eagle, pair with nest on cliff (Al Wool); Prairie Falcon; Peregrine Falcon; Sparrow Hawk; Calif. Quail; Mourning Dove; Poor-will; White-throated Swift; Anna's Hummingbird; Belted Kingfisher; Red-shafted Flicker; Acorn Woodpecker, male looking out nest hole; Downy Woodpecker; Nuttall's Woodpecker; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Black Phoebe; Say's Phoebe; Western Flycatcher; Violet-green Swallow; Scrub Jay; Plain Titmouse; Bush-tit, feeding young in nest; White-breasted Nuthatch; Wren-tit; House Wren, feeding nestlings; Bewick's Wren; Canyon Wren; Rock Wren, feeding young in nest in gopher hole (Anne Peterson); Calif. Thrasher; Western Bluebird; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, nest-building; Hutton's Vireo; Solitary Vireo; Warbling Vireo; Orange-crowned Warbler, incubating; Audubon's Warbler; Black-headed Grosbeak; Purple Finch; House Finch; Ark. Goldfinch; Lawrence's Goldfinch, nest-building; Spotted Towhee; Brown Towhee; Rufous-crowned Sparrow; Bell's Sparrow; Ore. Junco; White-crowned Sparrow; Golden-crowned Sparrow; Song Sparrow.

Angeline and Irving Snow

REPORT OF FIELD TRIP, April 22, 1951. Owing to unsatisfactory circumstances the trip planned for the Uvas Valley was given up in favor of a trip to Mr. T. T. Tourtillott's place, "Coon Hollow" on Metcalf Rd. Twenty-six members and guests gathered to enjoy Mr. Tourtillott's hospitality and the fine birding at his place, and later to follow him to the Tony Costa Ranch in Hidden Valley, amid oak-covered hills. The morning was heavily overcast, clearing somewhat toward noon, but remaining partly overcast the rest of the day. Wild flowers were quite profuse although those which close at night were late in opening.

We had quite a list of birds at Coon Hollow, and enjoyed watching a Black Phoebe feeding young in a nest. Several lucky persons had the thrill of seeing a White-throated Sparrow, located by Mrs. Beatrice Nielsen. After a short hour and half here we went on to the Costa Ranch, where we found a creek to explore and a chorus of bird songs. The highlight here was finding a junco's nest in the grass on the bank beside the path. Our passing too close to the nest caused the mother to flush and reveal her four eggs. After lunch at the picnic tables, Mr. Tourtillott took us into the ranch house to see the unique western-style living room with its decorative, multi-patterned tile floor and novel light fixtures made of horseshoes and cartwheels. After another hour of birding we turned our cars homeward.

Bird list: Sharp-shinned Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Calif. Quail; Mourning Dove; Horned Owl; Red-shafted Flicker; Acorn Woodpecker; W. Kingbird; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Black Phoebe; W. Flycatcher; Horned Lark; Violet-green Swallow; Purple Martin; Steller's Jay; Scrub Jay; Yellow-billed Magpie; Crow; Plain Titmouse; House Wren; Bewick's Wren; Calif. Thrasher; W. Bluebird; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Hutton's Vireo; Warbling Vireo; Orange-crowned Warbler; Yellow Warbler; Black-throated Gray Warbler; W. Meadowlark; Bullock's Oriole; Brewer's Blackbird; Black-headed Grosbeak; Lazuli Bunting; House Finch; Ark. Goldfinch; Spotted Towhee; Brown Towhee; Lark Sparrow; Ore. Junco; White-crowned Sparrow; Golden-crowned Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; Song Sparrow.

Charles and Fanny Zwaal

REPORT OF FIELD TRIP TO "SUMMUS MONS," April 29, 1951. "Hail, hail, the Audubon gang's all here"—fourteen strong they arrived at the top of the mountain, to be greeted with a heavy pelting of hailstones. Soon, shaking off the pellets, they were inside and thawing out in front of a roaring fire. Although not the conventional lunch hour, hot coffee and picnic lunches were disposed of, while waiting out the storm. Finally, putting on all available earmuffs and sheep-lined coats, the bird watchers went out into a beautiful world of cumulus clouds and wide vistas—Tamalpais, Mount Diablo, cloud-covered Mount Hamilton, the entire blue curve of Monterey Bay.

The fire truck road, which continues on from the end of the Alma Soda Springs Road and swings over toward Mt. Umunhum and Loma Prieta, was chosen for the bird hike. For a mile and a half along this road Bell's Sparrows were looked for in the chaparral which stretches away on both sides, but no luck, not even where the leader had seen one carrying food the day before. However, other birds on this brushy mountain slope put on a good show: California Thrasher, Bewick's Wren, Spotted Towhee, Wren-tit, Scrub Jay. And on the way back, close by the trail, a female Cooper's Hawk rose swiftly into the air with a quail in her talons, and made off down the canyon, probably to feed nestlings. Back near the cabin, where trees have been planted, were Oregon Junco, Purple Finch, Bush-tit, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Audubon's Warbler, Golden-crowned Sparrow; and, only five feet up in a cypress tree, an Anna's Hummingbird sitting so tight on her tiny nest that she would not flush and reveal her two eggs until almost touched. No, there were not many birds on the windy mountain top but it was a good trip!

Frances Dieterich

REPORT OF ALVISO-DUMBARTON FIELD TRIP, May 6, 1951. The high point of the spring migration of shorebirds was reached in April but representatives of most of the species which migrate north along the Pacific coast were found. Evidence of the progress of the pre-nuptial molt was detected in some species. The Red-backed Sandpipers were in the latter stages of the pre-nuptial molt, some individuals having the black "window" of the underparts complete, others still showing a few grayish feathers of the winter plumage below. The increase in aggressiveness associated with the onset of the breeding season and the consequent upswing in territorial behavior was well shown by the Western Sandpipers which clashed repeatedly like diminutive gamecocks, seldom tolerating another individual of the same species within several inches while foraging.

The Avocets near the KGO transmitter were apparently nesting. They responded to the approach of the group by flying close overhead giving their loud calls and then settling to the levees to perform the "distraction display", dragging themselves along in simulated distress.

Les Sleeper located the nest of a Savannah Sparrow concealed in a clump of grass on a levee. It contained 5 eggs. The territorial songs of Savannah Sparrows and Alameda Song Sparrows (subspecies pusillula) were heard constantly in the marshland.

The dowitchers were carefully listened to since there is a suspicion that the calls of the more interior (San Joaquin Valley, etc.) fresh-water Long-billed Dowitcher are different from those of the more coastal salt-water species, the Short-billed Dowitcher. All of the calls heard were the sharp, clear-cut "beet-beet" notes which are assumed to be those of the Short-billed Dowitcher. (The relationships of the dowitchers have but recently been clarified. See Pitelka's monograph on the group, Univ. of Calif. Publ. in Zoology, vol. 50, No 1, 1950 for the full story.)

A small group of "bitter-enders" located the prize of the day at the west end of Dumbarton Bridge---a female Old-squaw Duck resting on a small shell-strewn beach in company with a female American Golden-eye and a female Lesser Scaup. The Old-squaw was still in winter plumage which leads to the suspicion that it had neither molted nor migrated due to some endocrine (hormonal) upset or injury.

Barn Swallows were carrying feathers under a bridge on the Los Esteros Road near Alviso indicating that they were at the nest-lining stage of nest building. Cliff Swallows were obtaining mud from the shore of the Bay just north of the east end of Dumbarton Bridge and carrying it to the nesting colony under the bridge.

Birds seen: Eared Grebe, 30; White Pelican, 50 on levee near quarry at east approach to Dumbarton Bridge; Great Blue Heron, 3; American Egret, 12; Black-crowned Night Heron, 1; American Bittern, 1 with white nuptial patches showing; Mallard, 1; Pintail, a pair plus 1; Cinnamon Teal, a pair; Shoveller, a pair; Lesser Scaup, 30; American Golden-eye, 1; Old-squaw, 1; Turkey Vulture, 5; Marsh Hawk, 1; Clapper Rail, 2; Semipalmated Plover, 1; Killdeer, 3; Black-bellied Plover, 2; Ruddy Turnstone, 1; Long-billed Curlew, 1; Willet, 30; Greater Yellow-legs, 11; Least Sandpiper 1; Western Sandpiper, 500 plus; Red-backed Sandpiper, 5; Short-billed Dowitcher, 75; Avocet, 20; Black-necked Stilt, 6; Northern Phalarope, 2; Ring-billed Gull, many; Forster Tern, 100 plus; Mourning Dove, 1; Barn Swallow, 4; Cliff Swallow, many; Mockingbird, 1; Western Meadowlark, 10; Brewer Blackbird, nesting at Alviso and at Dumbarton near the quarry; House Finch, nest at KGO transmitter; Savannah Sparrow, many; Song Sparrow, many.

Charles Sibley

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SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, Branch of the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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