

BULLETIN OF THE
SANTA CLARA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

December * * * * * 1951

BIRD BOOKS

The tools of the bird student are few--his own senses, possibly a binocular, and one or more books. Usually the first book to be acquired is one of the "field guides" to aid in identification. Of the many such guides available two are of special value; "A Field Guide to Western Birds" by Roger Tory Peterson (Houghton-Mifflin, 1941. \$3.50) and "Birds of the Pacific States" by Ralph Hoffmann (Houghton-Mifflin, 1927, \$3.50). Peterson's "Field Guide" is restricted to identification while Hoffmann's book contains considerable information on life history, behavior, etc.

For more detailed information on geographic distribution and occurrence in California we are fortunate to have "The Distribution of the Birds of California" by Grinnell and Miller (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 27, publ. by the Cooper Ornithological Club, 1944. \$7.50. Address: Dep't. of Zoology, Univ. of Calif., Los Angeles, Calif.) For local records, although now somewhat dated, "A Directory to the Bird Life of the San Francisco Bay Region" by Grinnell and Wythe (Pac. Coast Avifauna, No. 18, 1927, \$3.00) is useful. Santa Clara county is included.

Sooner or later the bird student becomes interested in such matters as migration, territory, behavior, physiology, molts, plumages, and other phases of the biology of birds. There is no up-to-date book on avian biology written for the U.S. but the British have several which are excellent and which apply equally well to our country since principles rather than merely species are the matters of concern. Every member of the S.C.V.A.S. should obtain a copy of James Fisher's "Watching Birds" (Penguin Books, Ltd., London. 1951, rev. ed. PRICE FIFTY CENTS(!)). The Calif. Book Co. in San Jose has a few copies and will order more. This little paper bound book of 178 pages contains interestingly written non-technical discussions of bird anatomy, classification, migration, ecology, territory, populations, display and behavior, nesting, and other topics. "Birds As Animals" by James Fisher (Heinemann, 1939) is a more extensive (and more expensive) book on the same subjects.

"Bird Display and Behavior" by E.A. Armstrong (Oxford Univ. Press, 1947. \$5.00) is the most complete volume on bird psychology available. The classic, "Territory in Bird Life" by Eliot Howard was first published in 1920. It has been reprinted (Collins, London. 1948. \$2.50) and is once again available. This book is not only authoritative but is beautifully written.

There are several volumes on bird migration. A recent and inexpensive pamphlet by Frederick C. Lincoln, "Migration of Birds" (U.S. Dep't. Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service Circular No. 16. 1950. 30¢) may be obtained from the Sup't. of Documents, Washington 25, D.C.

For the results of the latest investigations the bird student should join one or more of the organizations which publish ornithological journals. The Cooper Ornithological Club publishes the "Condor", the American Ornithologists Union publishes the "Auk", and the Wilson Ornithological Club, "The Wilson Bulletin". The undersigned will be pleased to provide further information about these organizations.

Charles G. Sibley

WAXWINGS

On Sunday, November 4 at 4:00 p.m. a commotion in my garden aroused my interest. I found a flock of Cedar Waxwings settling into a pear tree approximately 15 feet up, where the foliage was thickest. They made not the slightest move so I pulled up a chair and watched them from a distance of 25 feet until dark. For the next 1½ hours the eleven birds on my side of the tree did not move in the least; some appeared to be leaning against twigs. Were they so exhausted that food was of no interest? The following morning they were gone.

Curt Dietz

C A L E N D A R F O R D E C E M B E R

A FIELD TRIP TO HALL'S VALLEY AND SMITH CREEK will be taken this coming Saturday, December 1, with Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Prusman as leaders. Hall's Valley is on the way to Mt. Hamilton, about twelve miles from San Jose; and Smith Creek Ranger Station only five or six miles beyond Hall's Valley. On a field trip to this area in late November two years ago seventy-one species of birds were listed. Meet in East San Jose at corner of Alum Rock Ave. and Mt. Hamilton Rd. at 8 a.m. Bring lunch.

THE SECOND AUDUBON SCREEN TOUR, "Ozark Idyll," will be presented Friday, December 7, by Alfred G. Etter. Dr. Etter got his training in photography as an aviation cadet in the U.S. Air Forces. Stationed for a while in Missouri, his native state, he discovered and filmed "Wildwood," an old estate in the foothills of the Ozark Mts. These color motion pictures of the old mansion and its farm, where crops were being reaped almost as they were a century ago, were the beginnings of "Ozark Idyll." After the war he studied wildlife management under Aldo Leopold; then returned to Missouri to get a Ph.D in botany at Washington University. Dr. Etter's pastoral film tells the year-round story of "Wildwood," and of the wild creatures which live on the farm and in the beautiful woodland which gave its name to the estate.

The Screen Tour will be presented at 8 p.m. in the Montgomery Theatre, San Jose Civic Auditorium. There will be no matinee in the afternoon. From all accounts "Ozark Idyll" is a very beautiful and interesting Screen Tour and should be given lots of publicity. Tickets are 74 cents (students 50 cents) and can be had at the door.

THE REGULAR DECEMBER MEETING will be held on Monday, December 10, in the Junior Museum, at the Palo Alto Community Center, at 8 p.m. Mr. Bert L. Werder, Fire Warden in San Mateo Co., will give an illustrated talk on Butano Forest and Its Relation to Our Recreational Program. Mr. Werder was among the first proponents for the preservation of Butano Forest and helped organize Butano Forest Associates, a group of local conservationists who are working for the acquisition of this forest of virgin redwoods for a state park. Leona Jakobsen, Program Chairman.

THE MIDWEEK BIRD TRIP will be taken on Wednesday morning, December 12, to the Sibleys home between Los Gatos and Saratoga, with Mrs. Sibley as leader. Meet there at 9:00 a.m. If you don't know the way, be at the Quito Fire Station at 8:50. The station is on the Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd. two miles from the center of Saratoga and a mile and a half from the corner of Los Gatos-Saratoga Rd. and N. Santa Cruz Ave. in Los Gatos.

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT will be made on Sunday, December 30. This will be the twenty-first year in which the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has made a "Christmas Census" and the fifty-second since the late Dr. Frank Chapman first proposed the idea. Groups in all parts of the country will be making their counts during the week between Christmas and New Year's. The results are published by the National Audubon Society. We need lots of help—the more eyes the better—so plan to participate this year. We want to cover our 15-mile-diameter circle as completely as possible in order to obtain the best possible index to the bird population in the area. Last year we almost had the largest total count in the U.S. Let's make it the largest (and best) this year! The meeting place will be in San Jose, at corner of E. San Carlos and 5th Streets, at 8 a.m. At the meeting place the leader, Charles Sibley, will explain the rules of the count and outline the procedure to be followed. Bring lunch.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

FREMONT PEAK STATE PARK, November 17, 1951. Thirty members enjoyed the trip to Fremont Peak, where in 1846 Captain John C. Fremont prematurely raised the American flag. The day was perfect for the trip and the views far-reaching as we drove up the steep mountain road to this highest peak in the Gabilan Range.

We parked our cars in the picnic area just below the summit and started out to explore the trails. An old road across a wooded slope led to an abandoned dolomite mine; a steep rocky trail to the top of the limestone peak; and other trails through open groves of oaks and out into grassy areas. Perhaps the most conspicuous bird in this area—certainly the most amusing—was the Acorn Woodpecker. From the tops of oaks the woodpeckers would launch themselves almost vertically into the air, seemingly after insects, and then with a short turnabout, drop back to the oaks. Other birds also seen flycatching, although not of the Flycatcher Family, were Western Bluebird, Audubon Warbler, and Cedar Waxwing.

Birding in the picnic area and along the trails resulted in the following list: Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Sparrow Hawk, California Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Red-shafted Flicker, Acorn Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied (Red-breasted) Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Nuttall Woodpecker, Say Phoebe, Scrub Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Plain Titmouse, Bush-tit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wren-tit, Bewick Wren, Rock Wren, Robin, Hermit Thrush, Western Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, Audubon Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Purple Finch, House Finch, Arkansas Goldfinch, Spotted Towhee, Brown Towhee, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Oregon Junco, and Golden-crowned Sparrow.

On the trip down the mountain the botanically minded stopped at a stand of pines not far below the picnic area and identified them as Coulter Pines; and again at a lookout point where scrub oak, manzanita, silktassel, and ceanothus formed extensive chaparral, to observe the rather rare Creeping Sage which was growing abundantly there as an undershrub. Farther down a Flowering Currant, blooming early, stopped the last two cars briefly.

Charles and Viola Anderson

BIRD-BANDING DEMONSTRATION. Twenty-seven members and guests made the trek to Los Gatos on November 25 to participate in the bird-banding work at the Sibleys. Fifty-seven individuals of seven species were banded. Of these, 34 were Golden-crowned Sparrows; 14 Oregon Juncos; 2 each of California Quail, Scrub Jay, California Thrasher, and Brown Towhee; and 1 Spotted Towhee.

Charles Sibley

ALVISO SALT MARSHES, November 23, 1951. During an early morning visit, while the tide was high and a few hunters' guns were popping, we listed the following birds: Common Loon, 1; Eared Grebe, 19; White Pelican, 48; Great Blue Heron, 2; Pintail, 0; Shoveller, 4; Ruddy Duck, 1; White-tailed Kite, 1; Killdeer, 16; Wilson Snipe, 2; Long-billed Curlew, 12; Spotted Sandpiper, 1; Willet, about 400 resting together, Greater Yellow-legs, 7; Sandpipers, very large flocks (in one small flock: 23 Least, 39 Western, 25 Red-backed); Dowitcher, about 150; Avocet, more than 500 resting together; Ring-billed Gull, numerous; Bonaparte Gull, about 100; Burrowing Owl, 2; Belted Kingfisher, 2; Black Phoebe, 1; Long-billed Marsh Wren, 2; Water Pipit, many; Loggerhead Shrike 2; Audubon Warbler, 21; Yellow-throat, 2; Western Meadowlark, 7; Red-winged Blackbird, about 50; Savannah Sparrow, 18; Song Sparrow, 5.

Etta Smith and Emily Smith.

ROOSTING BIRDS

The many birds so much in evidence during the day are seldom seen while roosting at night. A little search around your own home will probably reveal the habitual nocturnal perches of some of your dooryard birds. During the day make a search for concentrations of droppings on the ground under the eaves, below dense clumps of foliage, or other sheltered spots. After dark search the possible perches above these areas with a flashlight. Individual birds maintain the same roosting perch for long periods. There is a Chestnut-backed Chickadee which retires each night to a perch on a climbing vine under our eaves, a Brown Towhee roosts in the dense cover of a clump of live-oak foliage and a House Finch used to roost on a vine beside the screened porch. Roosting birds tuck their heads under the feathers of the back (not under the wing!) and fluff out their plumage in order to increase the insulating effect. How many roosting birds can you find?

Charles Sibley

NEW MEMBERS

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the last membership list was published.

- Mr. Val T. Andersen, P.O. Box 353, Los Gatos
- Mrs. Follette Brotherton, 371 Eighth Ave., Santa Cruz
- Mr. Edmund T. Dana, Route 1, Box 353-A, Los Altos
- Mrs. Wilhelm Flugge, 2380 Ramona St., Palo Alto
- Mr. Raymond M. Des Camp, 500 Tyndall St., Los Altos
- Mr. Claude E. Flock, Fremont Union High School, Sunnyvale
- Dr. M.R. Kirkwood, 249 Lowell Ave., Palo Alto
- Miss Phoebe E. Mitchell, 1318 Glenwood Ave., San Jose 25
- Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mueser, 312 Oakwood Place, Menlo Park

BARGAINS IN BIRD BOOKS

In these days of high prices a bargain is a rare thing. Seldom has a better bargain been offered than the 2 volume set of Murphy's, "Oceanic Birds of South America" for \$5.00. This work was originally published at \$17.50 and is now being closed out. It may be obtained from Dover Publications, Inc., 1780 Broadway, New York 19, N.Y. Total: \$5.10 -- the dime is for postage. Dover Publications deals in "publishers remainders" and offers many excellent bargains in natural history books. Some samples from their latest price list: "Field Guide to the Birds of the West Indies" by Bond (published at \$3.75) now \$1.69. "Birds of the Philippines" by Delacour and Mayr (\$3.75) \$1.98.

I have just received a copy of "How To Study Birds" by Dr. Stuart Smith. This is one of the excellent British books covering such topics as migration, territory, nesting, behavior, song, flight, anatomy, etc. It was published at \$3.00. Dover Publ. has it for \$1.25 plus 10¢ postage! I heartily recommend it. Even if you do not buy write and ask for their price lists covering topics of interest to you. Many of us have been buying from them for years and find them eminently satisfactory.
C.S.

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

- President: Albert J. Wool, Rt. 2, Box 728, San Jose
- Corr. Sect'y: Miss Eva Allen, P.O. Box 772, Los Gatos
- Editor: Charles G. Sibley, Rt. 1, Box 241, Los Gatos
- Assoc. Editor: Miss Emily Smith, Rt. 1, Box 387, Los Gatos

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE 1951 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sunday, December 30.

AREA: Same as in past years. A 15 mile diameter circle with the center at the junction of Mabury Road and Capitol Ave.

MEETING PLACE: 5th. and San Carlos, San Jose, 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch. The tally of the count will be held at 4:00 p.m. at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lester Brubaker, 191 Mountain View Ave., San Jose. Be there promptly.

SECTORS: The Area will be divided into 5 Sectors, as follows:

- A. The Alviso Sector. Bounded on the east by State Route 17 (the Oakland H'way) and on the south by U.S. 101 (Bayshore Highway).
- B. The Southwest Sector. Bounded on the north and east by U.S. 101.
- C. The Evergreen Sector. Bounded by U.S. 101, Alum Rock Ave., and the Mt. Hamilton Road. The Mt. Hamilton Road is in the Evergreen Sector--thus the Evergreen Sector includes the road itself and Hall's Valley.
- D. The Alum Rock Sector. Bounded by Alum Rock Ave., Mt. Hamilton Rd., U.S. 101, State Route 17, Capitol Ave., and Sierra Road. (Sierra Road is in Sector E).
- E. The Calaveras Sector. Bounded by U.S. 17, Capitol Ave., and Sierra Road. Sierra Road is in this sector.

SECTOR LEADERS: Sector Leaders are as follows: "A" - Charles Sibley; "B" - Matt Vessel; "C" - Emily Smith; "D" - Grace Brubaker; "E" - Al Wool.

Each sector leader is responsible for planning the itinerary within his or her sector. One or more co-leaders may be chosen by the sector leader so that the groups may split up and thus cover the sectors more thoroughly. Itineraries should be planned in advance and a scouting trip made if possible.

RECORDS: Keep a record of weather (temperature, rainfall, wind, cloud cover, etc.); habitats (salt marsh, orchard, oak woodland, grassland, urban, chaparral, lake, etc.); hours and mileage on foot and in cars.

In making estimates of large numbers indicate the probable error, for example, 5000 \pm 500; 150 \pm 25; etc.

Try to cover your sector as thoroughly as possible. Do not spend more time in a locality than is necessary to count the birds present.

One person in each group should be appointed as the scribe to record the counts of each species. Keep a neat and complete record so that the final tally may be made quickly and accurately.

LET'S GO!